CHRISTIAN

MORALS:

BY

HANNAH MORE.

In moral actions, Divine law helpeth exceedingly the law of Reason to guide a man's life; but in supernatural, it alone guideth. HOOKER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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AS

A SLIGHT MEMORIAL

OF

SINCERE ESTEEM AND CORDIAL FRIENDSHIP,

THIS LITTLE SKETCH

OF

CHRISTIAN MORALS

IS,

WITH STRICT PROPRIETY,

INSCRIBED TO

THE REV. THOMAS GISBORNE,

OF YOXALL LODGE;

IN HIS WRITINGS AND IN HIS LIFE,

A CONSISTENT

CHRISTIAN MORALIST.

PREFACE.

MR. POPE, in his Eſſay on Criticiſm, has aſſerted, that the "laſt and greateſt art" of literary compoſition, is "the art to blot." With a full conviction of the difficulty and the duty of this art, the author of the following pages ventures to inſiſt, even in contradiction to this high authority, that there is, in writing, an art ſtill more rare, ſtill more ſlowly learned, ſtill more reluctantly adopted — *the art to ſtop.*

But when ſhall this difficult, but valuable, art be reſorted to? At what preciſe moment ſhall we begin to reduce ſo wholeſome a theory to practice? It may be anſwered — at the period when time may reaſonably be ſuſpected to have extinguiſhed the ſmall particle of fire which the fond

conceit of the author might tempt him to fancy he once poſſeſſed.

But how is he to aſcertain this critical moment of extinction? His own eyes, always dim in the diſcernment of his own faults, may have become quite blind. His friends are too timid, or too tender, to hazard the perilous intimation. If his enemies, always kindly ready to perform this neglected office of friendſhip, proclaim the unwelcome truth, they are probably not believed. The public, then, who are neither governed by the miſleadings of affection, nor influenced by the hoſtility of hatred, would ſeem to be the proper arbiters, the court from whoſe deciſion there ſhould lie no appeal.

But if, through generous partiality to good intentions, or habitual kindneſs to long acquaintance, that public, inſtead of checking, continue to cheriſh, the efforts which they have been accuſtomed to indulge, and the author be tempted ſtill to perſiſt in writing, may he not be in imminent danger of

of wearing out the good humour of his protectors, by a ſucceſſive reproduction of himſelf — of abuſing their kindneſs, by the vapid exhibition of an exhauſted intellect?

May the writer of the following pages, without incurring too heavily the imputation of vanity, be permitted to obſerve, that there is a ſenſe in which the favour ſhe has uniformly experienced, is honourable to that public who have conferred it? Their indulgence has never been purchaſed by flattery; their ſupport has never been a payment for ſoftening errors that require, not to be qualified, but combated; has never been a reward for incenſe offered to the paſſions, for ſentiments accommodated to whatever appeared to be defective in any reigning opinion, in any prevailing practice. They have received with approbation unvarniſhed truth, and even borne with patience bold remonſtrance. In return, ſhe is willing to hope, that ſhe has paid them a more ſubſtantial reſpect, by this hazardous ſincerity, than if ſhe had endea-

endeavoured to conciliate their regard by indirect arts and unworthy adulation.

Next to injuring any reader, her deepest regret would be to offend him; but when the questions agitated are of momentous concern, would not disguising truth, or palliating error, be, as to the intention, the worst of injuries, however powerless the writer might be in making a bad intention effectively mischievous? Sincere, therefore, as would be her concern, if any stroke of her pen

Should tend to make one worthy man her foe,

yet the feeling of having contributed to mislead a single youthful mind, by the suppression of a right, or the establishment of a false principle, would be more painful than any censures which an imprudent honesty might draw down upon her.

If the humble work now presented to the world, be of little use to the reader, the writer is willing to hope it may not be altogether unprofitable to herself. If it induce

her more ſtrenuouſly to cultivate the habit of rendering ſpeculation practical, if it ſhould diſpoſe her to adopt more cordially what ſhe is ſo prompt to recommend, ſhe will then have turned to ſome little account the hours of pain and ſuffering under which it has been compoſed.

She does not, however, abſurdly preſume to plead pain and ſuffering as an apology for defects in a work which ſhe was at liberty not to have undertaken; for, with whatever other evils ſickneſs may be chargeable, it impoſes on no one the neceſſity of adding one more to the countleſs catalogue of indifferent books.

Barley Wood,
December 10*th*, 1812.

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CHRISTIAN MORALS.

CHAP. I.

On the Writers of Pious Books.

ALL the things in this world carry in them ſuch evident marks of imperfection, are ſo liable to be infected with error, good is ſeparated from evil by ſuch ſlight partitions, and the deflection from what is right is ſo eaſy, that even undertakings which ſhould ſeem moſt exempt from danger are yet inſecure in their conduct, and uncertain in their iſſue. Writing a ſoundly-religious book might ſeem to put in the claim of an exempt caſe; but does experience prove that the exemption is infallible? The employment is good, the motive is likely to be pure; the work may be unexceptionable in its tendency, and uſeful in its conſequences. But is it always beneficial to the

writer in the proportion in which he intends it to be profitable to the reader? Even of the reader, is his own improvement always the leading aim? Does a critical ſpirit never diminiſh the benefit which the book was calculated to convey? If he is convinced by the more eſſential truths it imparts, is not ſome trivial diſagreement of opinion, in a matter on which perſons may differ without any charge againſt the piety of either, made to defeat all the ends of improvement? Is not an inſignificant, perhaps an ill-founded objection, ſuffered to invalidate the merit of the whole work? Is not this eagerly-detected fault triumphantly kept in the fore-ground, while all that is valuable is overlooked and its efficacy defeated; the criticiſm being at once intended to give prominence to the error of the writer and the ſagacity of the critic? Another reader is probably ſearching for brilliancy when he ſhould be looking for truth, or he is only ſeeking a confirmation of his own opinions when

when he ſhould rather have been looking for their correction.

As to the writer, is he not in danger of being abſorbed in the mechanical part of his work, till religious compoſition dwindles into a mere ſecular operation? May he not be diverted from his main object by an over-attention to elegance, to correctneſs, to ornament, —all which indeed are neceſſary; for if he would benefit he muſt be read, if he would be read he muſt pleaſe, if he would pleaſe he muſt endeavour to excel;—but may he not in taking ſome, take too much pains to pleaſe, and ſo become leſs ſolicitous to benefit, to the injury both of his reader and himſelf? May not the very lopping and pruning his work, the flowers which he is anxiouſly ſticking into it, the little decorations with which he is ſetting off thoſe parts which he fears may be thought dry and dull, raiſe a ſenſation in his mind not unlike that which a vain beauty feels in tricking out her perſon? May he not, by too much confidence in his own powers, be blind to

errors obvious to all but himſelf; or elſe may he not uſe the file too aſſiduouſly, and by over-labour in ſmoothing the aſperities of his ſtyle, diminiſh the force of his meaning, and poliſh honeſt vigour into unprofitable elegance?

Some indeed have been ſo indulgent to authors under their many difficulties, as to allow them a certain mixture of inferior excitement, as an under-help to aſſiſt ſuch motives as are more pure. If they did not feel a little too full of their work, when it was under their hand, it has been ſaid, they would not devote to it the full force of their mind. This anxiety, or rather this abſorption, it is preſumed, laſts no longer than till the immediate object is accompliſhed. It retreats indeed, but waits for the author, ſeizes him again with undiminiſhed force on his next undertaking. If he fancied that his former ſubject was all in all while his mind was intent upon it, that preference, like the fondneſs of an animal for its young, which is loſt when they

no longer need its fostering care, is transferred to the next.

As this ardour in a rightly-turned mind will not be sufficiently durable to ripen into vanity, but will cool as soon as the end for which it was exerted is answered; it will not materially injure the conscientious writer; for he will probably, when the impetus is taken off, as much undervalue his work, as he had before over-rated it. But woefully deficient in humility is that author, whose enthusiasm does not subside, when it is no longer necessary to keep alive the spirit of his undertaking! Convicted indeed will he be of vanity, who persists in thinking his work as glowing, as when, with a judgment dazzled by his ardour, he viewed it hot, and fresh-drawn from the furnace!

But perhaps when a man engages in any little service, if he did not in some degree exaggerate its value, in his hope of its utility, he would want one motive for attempting it. Is it not therefore a smaller evil

that he ſhould a little magnify its importance to his imagination, than that complete hopeleſſneſs ſhould totally defer him from all enterprize? Natural indolence is in many too powerful a ſubduer even of religious exertion, to allow them to work without hope. If hope flatters, ſhe at leaſt ſupports; thus ſomething is achieved which elſe would not have been done at all. Again, the timid writer foreſees that many objections may be raiſed to his work. This would amount to a diſqualifying dejection, did he not take comfort in the chance that his cenſors may poſſibly diſagree among themſelves as to the points deſerving criticiſm, and that one may even commend what another condemns. Thus his mind is kept in a juſt equilibrium; without the expectation of cenſure, he would be vain; without ſome hope of approbation, even the purity of his intention might not always ſecure him from deſpondency.

But though no mixed motives or human feelings in the author ought to interfere

fere with thoſe of the reader, who has only to do with the book, and not with the man, it is of no ſmall moment to himſelf, that both feelings and motives be pure. It is of the laſt importance that he do not impoſe on himſelf the belief, that he has only the honour of religion at heart, when literary renown, or victory over an adverſary, may be the predominating principle. He will alſo be careful that his beſt endowments be not converted into implements of injury; he will be cautious that his learning, which is ſo uſeful to arm his zeal, do not help to encumber it; that his prudence, which is ſo neceſſary to moderate, do not extinguiſh it.

But if he come off clear from theſe temptations, other and greater lurk behind. He ſhould bear in mind, that in compoſing a religious work for the public, he is producing the beſt part of himſelf; that he is probably exhibiting himſelf to others as much better than he is; for whatever be the faults of his own character, it is his bounden duty to conduct his reader to the higheſt approach

to excellence. Independent of his general defects, he is at leaſt carefully keeping out of ſight every vain thought which may have ſtolen upon him while writing, every evil temper which may have aſſailed him, every temptation to indulge too ardent a wiſh that his book may procure praiſe for himſelf, as well as benefit to his readers. To flatter himſelf inordinately on this head, as well as in overanticipating the great effects it will produce, is not, perhaps, the ſmalleſt of his dangers. That very ſelf-knowledge which he has perhaps been inculcating on others, would preſerve him from an undue eſtimation both of himſelf and his book.

It was the ſneer of a witty, but diſcouraging Satyriſt, that, "To mend the world's a vaſt deſign." It is, indeed, a deſign from which the purity of his motive may not always ſecure the humility of the author. Yet modeſtly to aim at a meliorating that little portion of it which lies within his immediate ſphere, is a duty out of which he ſhould not be laughed by wits and epigrammatiſts.

Inſtead

Inftead of indulging unfounded hopes of improbable effects, the Chriftian writer will be humbled at the mortifying reflection, what great and extenfive evil the moft infignificant bad man may effect, while fo little comparative good can be accomplifhed by the beft. But it is to be regretted, that even religion is no fure protection againft the intrufion of vanity, that it does not always fecure its poffeffor from over-rating his own agency, from fondly calculating on the unknown benefits which, by his projected work, he is preparing for mankind. A pious Welch minifter, many years ago, being about to publifh a fermon, previoufly confulted the writer of thefe pages how many thoufand copies he ought to print. He felt not a little fhocked at her advifing him to reduce his thoufands to hundreds; fcores fhe did not dare advife. As fhe had forefeen, not half a dozen were fold, except a few, charitably taken off his hands by his friends. At her return foon after, from the metropolis, he haftened to her with all the ardour of impatience, and ferioufly inquired,

whether ſhe had obſerved any material reformation at the court end of the town, ſince the publication of his diſcourſe.

Among the many unſuſpected but ſalutary checks to the vanity of a pious writer, it will not be the leaſt, that his very popularity may make the intrinſic value of his work queſtionable; — that he may be indebted for its favourable reception, not to its excellencies, but its defects, not to the deep, but to the ſuperficial views he has taken of religion; that it may be more acceptable only becauſe it is leſs ſearching; that if he has pleaſed, it may be owing to his having been more cautious than faithful. If there is reaſon to ſuſpect that his ſucceſs ariſes from his having ſkimmed the ſurface of truth, when he ought to have penetrated its depths, that he has reconciled the reader to Chriſtianity and himſelf by a diſingenuous diſcretion, by trimming between God and the world, by concealing truths he ought to have brought forward, or by palliating thoſe he durſt not diſavow: popularity thus obtained, will af-

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ford ground of humiliation rather than of triumph. In avoiding these, and all similar errors, he will also not fail to bear in mind, that He who gave the talents, gave also the right bent to the use of them, and that, therefore, he has no more ground for boasting of the application than of the possession.

When he is called upon by the nature of his subject to expatiate strongly on this vice, or to point out the danger of that error, Does he never feel a sort of conscious superiority to certain individuals of his acquaintance, who may be infected with either, and, for a moment, be tempted to sit rather in the seat of the scorner, than in that of the counsellor? On such occasions, there is nothing which he will more carefully watch, than the temper of his own mind. When duty compels him to be severe against any false opinion, or wrong practice, he will be cautious not to mix with his just censure, any feeling of disdain, any sentiment of indignation, against any individual whom he may bear in mind; nor will he indulge the unworthy wonder how

ſuch or ſuch a perſon will be mortified at the expoſure of a fault to which he is addicted. Nor will he harbour in his boſom an uncharitable vehemence againſt thoſe whom the reproof may ſuit, nor a ſecret ſelf-complacent certainty, that if *any thing* can do them good, this muſt do it; that though they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, they cannot but liſten to his pointed admonitions —that they can never ſtand out againſt ſuch perſuaſions as he has to offer—never reſiſt ſuch arguments as he has prepared for their conviction.

But what is ſtill a more ſerious danger, Has he never been tempted to overlook his own faults while he has been expoſing thoſe of others; and this, though the failing he is condemning, may be peculiarly his own? With juſt indignation againſt the offence he is reproving, Has he never once forgotten to mingle tender compaſſion for the offender, remembering, that he himſelf is ſinful duſt and aſhes; that he alſo ſtands in need of infinite mercy, and has been only reſcued

by

by that mercy from being on a level with the worſt objects of his juſt diſapprobation?

It would, notwithſtanding, be the higheſt degree of unfairneſs, to prefer a charge of injuſtice, hypocriſy, or even inconſiſtency, againſt an author, becauſe his life, in ſome reſpects, falls ſhort of the ſtrictneſs of his writings. It is a diſparity almoſt inſeparable from this ſtate of frail mortality. He may have fallen into errors, and yet deſerve to have no heavier charge brought againſt him than he has brought againſt others. Infirmity of temper, inequality of mind, a heart, though fearing to offend God, yet not ſufficiently dead to the world;—theſe are the lingering effects of ſin imperfectly ſubdued, in a heart which yet longs, prays, and labours for a complete deliverance from all its corruptions.

When a pious writer treats on any awful topic, he writes under a ſolemn conviction of its vaſt importance; he trembles at the idea of not being entirely faithful, of not being valiant for the truth, of not being honeſtly

honeſtly explicit, of not declaring the whole counſel of God. His own heart is deeply impreſſed with the dignity of his ſubject, and he deprecates the thought of ſhrinking from the boldeſt avowal of every truth, or of withholding the moſt powerful inforcement to the practice of every virtue. He is apprehenſive leſt, on the one hand, when he aſſails vice or error, he ſhould appear to indulge a violent or vindictive ſpirit, and be magiſterially lifting his fallible ſelf into the chair of authority; leſt his attack on the vice might be conſtrued into uncharitableneſs to the man. On the other hand, he is fearful leſt by being more forbearing he ſhould be leſs upright; leſt if he tried to ſoften he ſhould deceive; leſt, by indulging too much a ſpirit of conciliation, he ſhould compromiſe truth for human favour.— Honeſt though imperfect, ſincere though fallible, he endeavours to bring his principles, his faith, and his convictons, into full operation; he warmly declares what he cordially

feels, and faithfully teſtifies, what he firmly believes.

But when he comes to act, he is ſometimes brought to be too keenly ſenſible of the very fault in himſelf, againſt which he has been cautioning others; deeply does he lament that he feels ſtrong remains in himſelf of that corruption againſt which it was not the leſs his duty to direct his attacks. Some temptation preſſes him, ſome infirmity cleaves to him. Theſe unſubdued frailties prove that he is a man, but they do not prove that he is a hypocrite. The truth is, the religious writer is ſometimes thought worſe than other men, becauſe his book was conſidered as a pledge that he ſhould be better. It was expected that the faults he deſcribed he would avoid; the paſſions he had blamed he would ſuppreſs; the tempers he had expoſed he would have ſubdued. Perhaps it will commonly be found that the reader had expected too much and the writer done too little.

The

The writer on religious topics is however the perſon who of all others ought to watch himſelf moſt narrowly. He has given a public pledge of his principles. He has held out a rule, to which, as others will be looking with a critical eye to diſcover how far his conduct falls ſhort of it, ſo he ſhould himſelf conſtantly bear in mind the elevation of his own ſtandard; and he will be more circumſpect from the perſuaſion, that not only his own character but that of religion itſelf will ſuffer by his departure from it. The conſciouſneſs of the inferiority of his practice to his principles, if thoſe principles are truly ſcriptural, will furniſh him with new motives to humility. The ſolemn dread leſt this inconſiſtency ſhould be produced againſt him at the laſt day, is a freſh incentive to higher exertions, ſtirs him up to augmented vigilance, quickens him to more intenſe prayer. He experiences at once the contradictory feeling of dreading to appear better than he really is, by the high tone of piety in

in his compoſitions, or of making others worſe by lowering that tone in order to bring his profeſſions nearer to the level of his life. Perhaps the moſt humiliating moment he can ever experience is, when by an accidental glance at ſome former work he is reminded how little he himſelf has profited by the very arguments with which he may have ſucceſsfully combated ſome error of the reader; when he feels how much his own heart is ſtill under the dominion of that wrong temper of which he has forcibly expoſed the turpitude to the conviction of others.

There is, however, no perſonal reaſon which could ever juſtify his holding out an inferior ſtandard. If there is any point in which he eminently excels, he has the beſt of all poſſible reaſons for preſſing it upon others — his own experience of its excellence. If there be any in which he unhappily fails, he is clearly juſtified in recommending it from the humbling ſenſe of his own deficiency in it. Thus he will in either

case inforce truth with equal energy, from causes diametrically opposite. Is it not then obvious that as there is no vanity in insisting on a virtue because the writer possesses it, so there is no hypocrisy in recommending a quality because he himself is destitute of it?

But if, through the so frequently alledged imperfection attached to humanity, Christian writers do not always attain to the excellence they suggest, let us not therefore infer that their principles are defective, their aims low, or their practical attainments mean. Let us not suspect that it is not the endeavour of their life, as much as the desire of their heart, to maintain a conduct which shall not discredit their profession. Above all, let us be cautious of concluding that they do not believe what they teach, because they have passions like other men; provided we observe them struggling with those passions, and making a progress in their conquest over them, though that progress be impeded by natural infirmity, though it be obstructed by occasional irritation. The triumphant

detector

detector of the discordance between the author and his book knows not the secret regrets, hears not the fervent prayers, witnesses not the penitential sorrows, which a deep sense of this disagreement produces in the self-abasing heart. To instance in a familiar case: — In the heat of conversation with the author, he has probably marked an impatient word, a hasty expression, a rash judgment; these he treasures up, and produces against him; but he does not hear, in his nightly review of the errors of that day, his self-rebuke for this unsubdued impetuosity, his resolution against it, the earnest prayer, which perhaps at this moment is carrying forward the gradual subjugation of his temper.

Yet his reputation might suffer in another way; for if the critic could see these humbling confessions of the writers in question, he would be ready to conclude that they were "Sinners above all the Galileans." Whereas the truth most probably is, that they are so alive to the perception of the evil of their

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own hearts, that things which would be ſlight faults in the eſtimation of the accuſer, to them appear great offences. Things which they lament as evils of magnitude, would to the leſs tender conſcience be impalpable, imperceptible. For inſtance, — While the caviller would call even the omiſſion of prayer a venial fault; *they* would call a heartleſs prayer a ſin; where the one would think all was well if the literal performance had not been neglected, the other would be uneaſy under the exterior obſervance, if they felt that the ſpirit had not accompanied the form. The reprover might even accuſe the ſerious Chriſtian of abſurdity, ſhould he have overheard him humbling himſelf for ſomething which was obviouſly a virtue. He was not, however, ſo prepoſterouſly humble, as to make the virtue the ground of his regret — he was abaſing himſelf for ſome vanity, which like an excreſcence had grown out of it, ſome inattention which like a poiſon had mixed with it. When a humble man meditates on his vices, and an irreligious

irreligious man on his virtues, the vices of the one might be ſometimes deemed about as unſubſtantial as the virtues of the other actually are.

The writer of good books, in common with other authors, is expoſed to one danger from which other men are more exempt, that of being ſo immediately the object of his own attention. This may lead him to be too full of himſelf. His intellect is even more conſtantly before his eyes than the form and face of the beauty are before hers. But if in this exerciſe he may be tempted to think too well of his underſtanding, the miſchief will be counteracted by the advantage which ſuch a cloſe view may bring to his heart. The faults he reprehends in general, will bring his own faults more forcibly before him, and it will be a humbling conſideration which he will not fail to preſs home on himſelf, to reflect, that he is better able to penetrate into the receſſes of the erring hearts of others, from the ſympathies of his own.

Repeated and fuccefsful pains have been taken by fome popular wits *, in whom levity has anfwered the end of malice, to lower the value of pious inftruction, by expofing the difcrepancy between the exhortation and the exhorter. They have ingenioufly invented cafes and fituations in which the clergyman is preaching powerfully and efficacioufly on the duty of fubmiffion to the divine will; immediately after which, they contrive to betray him into a paroxyfm of overwhelming impatience at fome great domeftic calamity of his own. This, as it tends to make the infirmity of fincere Chriftians a matter of triumph, could only have been done with a view to make them ridiculous; a laugh is cheaply though not very honourably raifed, and the infignificance or hollownefs of religious inftruction perhaps indelibly ftamped on the mind of the young reader. But fuppofing the circumftances to have been real, Ought the frail affections, ought the confcious infirmity of thefe good

* Goldfmith, Fielding, &c. &c.

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men to have led them to withhold from their audiences the neceſſity of Chriſtian reſignation? Such inſtances of natural feeling in certain ſtages of a progreſſive piety, neither prove religion to be powerleſs, nor its profeſſor deceitful. Was the fervent, but fallible apoſtle, who, in a moment of infirmity, denied his maſter, a hypocrite, when he ſaid, "though all the world ſhould be offended, yet will not I?"

Yet is this captious ſpirit an additional reaſon why the pious writer ſhould guard againſt exceſſes in feeling, which if the reader could witneſs, he would exultingly reiterate the cheap but melancholy truiſm — *How much eaſier it is to preach than to practiſe!* How gladly would he have brought the conduct to confront the counſel, and have miſſed all the benefit of the diſcourſe, by the diſcloſure of the failing!

But allowing the worſt — granting that the writer is not in all points exemplary; if we reſolve never to read a work of inſtruction becauſe the author had faults, Lord

Bacon's

Bacon's inexhauſtible mine of intellectual wealth might have ſtill lain unexplored. Luther, the man to whom the Proteſtant world owes more than to any other uninſpired being, might remain unread, becauſe he is ſaid to have wanted the meekneſs of Melancthon. Even the divine inſtructions conveyed in the book of Eccleſiaſtes would have been written in vain.

It is not neceſſary that the writer under conſideration ſhould, like the ſacred penmen, criminate himſelf. Their ingenuous ſelf-abaſement added weight to the truth of their general teſtimony, and was doubtleſs directed by the holy ſpirit, as well for this purpoſe, as for the humiliation of the offending hiſtorian. But above all it is calculated to ſhew that the renovation of hearts ſo imperfect was the work of the ſpirit of God.

Though the pious writer in theſe days is not called upon to exerciſe this ſelf-diſparaging egotiſm, yet let not his ſilence on this head be attributed to a deſire that he may be thought

thought a better man than Moſes, who heroically perpetuated the memory of that offence which was an inhibition to his entering the land of promiſe — nor than David the reçorder of his own ſins, the enormity of which could only be exceeded by the intenſity of his repentance — nor than Saint Paul, who publiſhed himſelf to have been a blaſphemer and a perſecutor. — If the beſt men among us have, through the preventing grace of God been preſerved from the ſignal offences of Prophets and Apoſtles, they will themſelves be the foremoſt to acknowledge how, beyond all compariſon, they are below them, in that devotedneſs of ſpirit, that contempt of earthly things, and that annihilation of ſelf, which ſo eminently characterized thoſe inſpired Servants of God.

But ſuppoſe we were to go farther — even if it could be proved that ſome individual charge had *not* been altogether unfounded. Even this poſſible evil in the man, would not invalidate the truths he has been teaching. Balaam though a bad man pro-

phesied truly. Erasmus, whose piety is almost as doubtful, as his wit and learning were unquestionable, yet by throwing both into the right scale, was a valuable instrument in effecting the great work in which he was concerned. Erasmus powerfully assisted the reformation, though it is not quite so clear that the reformation essentially benefited Erasmus.

If then the writer advances unanswerable arguments in the cause of truth, if he impressively enforces its practical importance, his character, even if defective, should not invalidate his reasoning. Though we allow that even to the reader it is far more satisfactory when the life illustrates the writing, yet we must never bring the conduct of the man as any infallible test of the truth of his doctrine. Allow this, and the reverse of the proposition will be pleaded against us. Take the opposite case. Do we ever produce certain moral qualities which Hobbes, Bayle, Hume, and other sober sceptics possessed, as arguments for adopting their opinions?

nions? Do we infer as a neceffary confequence, that their fentiments are found becaufe their lives were not flagitious.

But though it is an awful poffibility, that the fame work may at once promote God's glory and prove a danger to the inftrument that promotes it — that the opulence of the very mind which is advancing religion, may be ufed by the owner to his hurt — that he may be fo abforbed in it as a bufinefs, that he may lofe fight of his end — that he may neglect perfonal, while he is advancing public religion — or be fo anxious for the fuccefs of his work, that he cannot commit the event to heaven: let us thankfully profit by the truths he teaches; blefs God that he has been ufeful to us; and pray that his errors may not be imputed to him.

Many a fincere Chriftian will confefs that when he is writing in an animated ftrain in the caufe of religion, there are moments in which, from imbecility of mind or infirmity of body, or failure of animal fpirits, while he is promoting the fpiritual interefts

of others, he is inwardly lamenting his own deadneſs to the very things on which he is inſiſting. He however perſeveres; like the army of Gideon, " faint yet purſuing," he ſuffers not the feeling to obſtruct the act, till, as a reward for his perſeverance, the act brings back the feeling. Were it ſuſpected that ſome of his moſt approved pages were written under this declenſion of zeal, what a clamour would be raiſed againſt his inconſiſtency, when his merit — if we dare uſe the word merit — conſiſts in overcoming the languor of his ſpirit, and in acting as if he felt it not. His depreſſion may in fact have been augmented by his humility. He has trembled leſt the ſolemnity with which he has been calling upon others, ſhould not ſtir up his own feelings; leſt the arguments which were intended to alarm the reader, ſhould leave his own heart cold and unaffected.

While it is of the nature of ſcientific principles to adapt themſelves only to one particular bent of mind, and of the inventive powers

powers to addrefs perfons of imagination only: it is the character of Chriftianity, and fhould be the aim of the Chriftian writer, to accommodate its inftructions to every clafs of fociety, to every degree of intellect, to every quality of mind, to every caft of temper. Chriftianity does not interfere with any particular form of ftudy, any political propenfity, any profeffional engagement, any legitimate purfuit. It claims to incorporate itfelf with the ideas of every intelligent mind which lies open to receive it; it infufes itfelf, when not repelled, into the character of every individual, as it originally affimilated itfelf to that of every Government, without facrificing any thing of its fpecific quality, without requiring any mind of a peculiar make for its reception.

Without altering its properties by any infufions of his own, a judicious writer will always confider how he may render it moft acceptable to the capacity of the general recipient. To exclude reafon from religion, he knows is not the way to attract argu-

argumentative men to enquire into its truth; — to exclude elegance from its exhibition, is not the probable method to invite men of tafte to fpeculate on its beauty. If however the writer poffefs little of the graces which embellifh truth, if he cannot adorn it with thofe charms which, though they add nothing to its luftre, yet attract to its contemplation; ftill plain fenfe and unaffected piety may contribute to the production of a work which may prove ufeful to a large and valuable proportion of readers. But here if genius is not effential, good tafte is never to be difpenfed with. A found judgment will be requifite to prevent piety from being repulfive to readers who have been accuftomed to view other intellectual fubjects exhibited in all the proprieties of which they are feverally fufceptible. Let them not fee a fubject of this tranfcendent importance, injured by any debafing mixture, disfigured by any coarfenefs of language, nor degraded by any vulgar affociations.

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On the other hand, while ſome object ſo ſtrenuouſly againſt the introduction of the affections into religion, what are we to underſtand from it, but that in the opinion of the objectors, a man will write the better becauſe he does not feel his ſubject,—that he will teach religion more ſafely to others, from not having felt its influence on his own heart,—that he will make a deeper impreſſion by writing from books than from himſelf, or rather that making an impreſſion at all is a dangerous thing,—that it is of the nature of enthuſiaſm, proceeding from it, and productive of it;—that therefore it is better that the reader ſhould not be impreſſed, but only informed.

But the ſound and ſober Chriſtian takes the beſt precaution againſt infuſing a fanatical ſpirit by not poſſeſſing it. He cannot communicate the diſtemper of which he is not ſick. He cautiouſly avoids it on a double ground. He knows that enthuſiaſm and ſuperſtition are not only miſchievous in their nature, but that they furniſh the

profane with a plaufible argument againft religion itfelf. He remembers, and applies the obfervation, that to fome Pagan Poets, efpecially Lucretius, thefe errors fupplied Atheifm with her moft powerful arms. But though he allows that enthufiafm is dangerous, he continues to write like one who knows *that* it is not the exclufive danger of the age, like one who is convinced that phrenzy is not the only diftemper in our fpiritual bills of mortality; like one whofe heart is warmed, not by animal pulfation, but by thofe quickening oracles of truth which carry in them "the demonftration of the fpirit and of power;" like one who feels that religion is not a mifleading fire, but an animating principle which at once enlarges his views, elevates his aims, and ennobles his character.

But to return to the reader.—If we had no higher reafon to aim at improvement in piety, one would almoft think that the mere feelings of gratitude and good-nature might tempt us to fhew our affection to

our

our pious benefactors, by profiting from their exhortations, their councils, their perſuaſions. It might almoſt touch a heart dead to ſuperior conſiderations, to reflect how many departed worthies have waſted their ſtrength, as to us, in vain. Among the witneſſes who will appear againſt us in the great day of account, *they* will ſtand the foremoſt. Let us tremble as we figure to ourſelves our unwilling accuſers in that band of holy men, who earneſtly ſought to draw us, not to themſelves, but to thoſe treaſures of inſpiration, of which they were the faithful expoſitors; to the Prophets and Apoſtles, — " to Jeſus the mediator of the new covenant, and to God the judge of all."

And is it not a cruel return to refuſe thoſe who ſtill meekly wait the effect of their labours upon earth, the honeſt gratification of ſeeing that we have derived ſome little advantage from their exertions? Let us ſhew them that they have not offered up the fervent prayers which doubtleſs accompanied their unwearied labours to no end.

end. While ſo many ſaints are now rejoicing in heaven, in the ſociety of thoſe whom their holy labours were made inſtrumental in bringing thither; let us not give thoſe who are ſtill zealouſly devoting their talents to the ſame glorious purpoſe upon earth, ſad cauſe to lament the total inefficacy of their endeavours—to regret that they are ſent to them who will not hear, or who remain as if they had not heard—to ſuſpect that if we do give them a patient hearing, it is for the ſake of their ſtyle, their rhetoric, their good taſte; but that when their eloquence oppoſes our corruptions, when their arguments croſs our inclinations, when their perſuaſions intrench upon our paſſions, or their remonſtrances interfere with our vanity, we are inſenſible to the voice of the charmer; or if we forgive their piety for the ſake of their talents, we ſeldom go further than forgiveneſs.

CHAP. II.

On Providence.

IT is not eaſy to conceive a more deplorable ſtate of mind, than to live in a diſbelief of God's providential government of the world. To be threatened with troubles, and to ſee no power which can avert them; to be ſurrounded with ſorrows, and diſcern no hand which can redreſs them; to labour under oppreſſion or calumny, and believe there is no friend to relieve, and no judge to vindicate us; to live in a world, of which we believe its ruler has abdicated the throne, or delegated the direction to chance; to ſuſpect that he has made over the triumph to injuſtice, and the victory to impiety; to ſuppoſe that we are abandoned to the caſualties of nature, and the domination of wickedneſs; to behold the earth a ſcene of diſorder, with no ſuperintendant to regulate it; to hear the

the ſtorms beating, and ſee the tempeſts ſpreading deſolation around, with no influence to direct, and no wiſdom to controul them: all this would render human life a burden intolerable to human feeling. Even a heathen, in one of thoſe glimpſes of illumination which they ſeemed occaſionally to catch, could ſay, *it would not be worth while to live in a world which was not governed by Providence.*

But, as ſoon as we clearly diſcern the mind which appoints, and the hand which governs, all events, we begin to ſee our way through them: as ſoon as we are brought to recognize God's authority, and to confide in his goodneſs, we can ſay to our unruly hearts, what he ſaid to the tempeſtuous waves, *Peace, be ſtill.* Though all is perplexity, we know who can reduce confuſion into order: once aſſured of the protection of the Supreme Intelligence, we ſhall poſſeſs our ſouls in patience, and reſign our will with ſubmiſſion. As ſoon as this conviction is fully eſtabliſhed, we become perſuaded that a being

a being of infinite love would never have placed us in a ſcene beſet with ſo many trials, and expoſed to ſo many dangers, had he not intended them as neceſſary materials by which, under his guidance, we are to work out our future happineſs; — as ſo many warnings not to ſet up our reſt here; — as ſo many incentives to draw us on in purſuit of that better ſtate to which eternal mercy is conducting us through this thorny way.

To keep God habitually in view, as the end of all our aims, and the diſpoſer of all events — to ſee him in all our comforts, to admire the benignity with which he imparts them — to adore the ſame ſubſtantial, though leſs obvious mercy, in our afflictions — to acknowledge at once the unwillingneſs with which he diſpenſes our trials, and the neceſſity of our ſuffering them — to view him in his bounties of creation, with a love which makes every creature pleaſant — to regard him in his providential direction with a confidence which makes every hardſhip ſupportable — to obſerve the ſubſerviency of events

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to his eternal purpofes: all this folves difficulties otherwife infuperable, vindicates the divine conduct, compofes the intractable paffions, fettles the wavering faith, and quickens the too reluctant gratitude.

The fabled charioteer, who ufurped his father's empire for a day, is not more illuftrative of *their* prefumption, who, virtually fnatching the reins of government from God, would involve the earth in confufion and ruin, than the denial which the ambitious fupplicant received to his mad requeft, is applicable to the goodnefs of God in refufing to delegate his power to his creatures: *My fon, the very tendernefs I fhew in denying fo ruinous a petition, is the fureft proof that I am indeed thy father.*

Sounds to which we are accuftomed, we fancy have a definite fenfe. But we often fancy it unjuftly; for familiarity alone cannot give meaning to what is in itfelf unintelligible. Thus many words, without any determinate and precife meaning, pafs current in common difcourfe. Some talk of thofe

chimerical

chimerical beings, nature, fate, chance, and neceſſity, as poſitively as if they had a real exiſtence, and of Almighty power and direction as if they had none.

In ſpeaking of ordinary events as fortuitous, or as natural, we diſpoſſeſs Providence of one half of his dominion. We aſſign to him the credit of great and avowedly ſupernatural operations, becauſe we know not how elſe to diſpoſe of them. For inſtance: — We aſcribe to him power and wiſdom in the creation of the world, while we talk as if we thought the keeping it in order might be effected by an inferior agency. We ſometimes ſpeak as if we aſſigned the government of the world to two diſtinct beings: whatever is awful only, and out of the common courſe, we aſcribe to God, as revolutions, volcanoes, earthquakes. We think the dial of Ahaz going backward, the ſun ſtationary on Gibeon, marvels worthy of Omnipotence; but when we ſtop here, is it not virtually ſaying, that to maintain invariable order, unbroken regularity, perpetual uniformity, and

ſyſtematic beauty in the heavens and the earth, does not exhibit equally ſtriking proofs of infinite ſuperintendance?

Many ſeem to aſcribe to chance the common circumſtances of life, as if they thought it would be an affront to the Almighty to refer them to him; as if it were unbecoming his dignity to order the affairs of beings whom he thought it no derogation of that dignity to create. It looks as if, while we were obliged to him for making us, we would not wiſh to encumber him with the care of us. But the gracious Father of the univerſal family thinks it no diſhonour to watch over the concerns, to ſupply the wants, and diſpoſe the lot of creatures who owe their exiſtence to his power, and their redemption to his mercy. He did not create his rational ſubjects in order to neglect them, or to turn them over to another, a capricious, an imaginary power.

We do not, it is true, ſo much arraign his general providence, as his particular appointments. We will allow the world to be nominally

minally his, if he will allow us our opinion in reſpect to his management of certain parts of it. Now, that he ſhould not put forth the ſame ſpecific energy individually to direct as to create, is ſuppoſing an anomaly in the character of the all perfect God. Whatever was his deſign in the formation of the world and its inhabitants, the ſame reaſon would, beyond a doubt, influence him in their ſuperintendance and preſervation. David, in deſcribing the ſimple grandeur of omnipotent benignity, ſets us a beautiful pattern. He does not repreſent the belief of God's providential care as an effort, but deſcribes our continual ſuſtenance as the neceſſary unlaboured effect of infinite power and goodneſs. *He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteouſneſs*; thus making our bleſſings rather, as it were, a reſult, than an operation.

And as we are not under the divided controul of a greater and a ſubordinate power, ſo neither are we, as the Perſian mythology teaches, the ſubjects of two equal beings, each of whom diſtributes reſpectively good

good and evil according to his peculiar character and province. Nor are we the ſport of the conflicting atoms of one ſchool, nor of the fatal neceſſity of another. There is one omnipotent, omniſcient, perfect, ſupreme Intelligence, who diſpoſes of every perſon and of every thing according to the counſel of his own infinitely holy will. "The help that is done upon earth, God doth it himſelf." The comprehenſive mind, enlightened by Chriſtian faith, diſcovers the ſame harmony and deſign in the courſe of human events, as the philoſopher perceives in the movements of the material ſyſtem.

Without a thorough conviction of this moſt conſolatory doctrine, what can we make of the events which are now paſſing before our eyes? What can we ſay to the perplexed ſtate of an almoſt deſolated world? There is no way of diſentangling the confuſion but by ſeeing God in every thing.—Not to adore his Providence as having ſome grand ſcheme which he is carrying on, ſome remote beneficial end in view, ſome unrevealed deſign to accompliſh, by means not

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only inſcrutable but ſeemingly contradictory, is practical atheiſm. To contemplate the events which diſtract the civilized world, the tyranny which tears up order and morality by the roots; to behold the calamities of ſome, the crimes of others—ſuch blackneſs gathering over the heads of ſome countries, ſuch tempeſts burſting over thoſe of others—theſe ſcenes muſt ſubvert the faith, muſt extinguiſh the hope, of all who do not firmly believe that the ſame power which "ſtilleth the raging of the ſea and the noiſe of the waves," can in his own good time alſo ſtill *the madneſs of the people*; will in his appointed ſeaſon enable us to ſay, "And where is the fury of the oppreſſor?" He may, and we know not how ſoon, enable us to aſk, "Where is the man that made the earth to tremble — that did ſhake kingdoms — that made the world as a wilderneſs — that deſtroyed the cities thereof — that opened not the houſe of his priſoners?" Yes — diſorganized as the ſtate of the world appears to be, let us be aſſured that it is not turned adrift, that things are not left to go

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on at randon. Though the people are rebellious, the Sovereign has not renounced his dominion over them. The moſt oppreſſive and deſtructive agents are his myſterious miniſters; they are carrying on, though unconſciouſly, his univerſal plan — a plan, which though complicated is conſiſtent; though apparently diſorderly will be found finally harmonious.

In ſome pieces of mechaniſm we have obſerved different artiſts employed in different branches of the ſame machinery: in this diviſion of labour, each man performs his allotted portion, in utter ignorance perhaps, not only of the portions aſſigned to the others, but alſo of the ultimate application of his own. Buſy in executing his ſingle pin, or ſpring, or wheel, it is no part of his concern to underſtand the work aſſigned to others, ſtill leſs to comprehend the ſcheme of the maſter. But though the workman is ignorant how the whole is to be arranged, the machine would have been incomplete without his ſeemingly inconſiderable contribution. In the mean-time the maſter

maſter unites, by apt junctures and articulations, parts which were not known to be ſuſceptible of connection; combines the ſeparate diviſions without difficulty, becauſe the ſeveral workmen have only been individually helping to accompliſh the original plan which had previouſly exiſted in his inventive mind.

The preſcience of God is among his peculiarly incommunicable attributes. Happy is it for us indeed that it *is* incommunicable, for if any portion of it were imparted to us, how inconceivably would the diſtreſs of human life be aggravated! But if we allow his omniſcience, we cannot doubt his Providence. He would not foreſee contingencies, for which he could not provide. His attributes are in fact ſo interwoven that it is impoſſible to ſeparate them. His omniſcience foreſees, his underſtanding, which is infinite, arranges, his ſovereignty decrees, his omnipotence executes the purpoſes of his will.— His wiſdom may ſee ſome things to be beſt for awhile to anſwer certain temporary purpoſes, which would not be good for a con-

tinuance.

tinuance. When the present appointment shall have answered the end to which it was determined, a new one, to which that was preparatory, takes place. The two arrangements may appear to us not to be of a piece, to be even contradictory; while yet this determination and this succession are perfectly consistent in the mind of a being who sees all things at once, and "calls things that are not as though they were." God's view of all men and all events throughout all ages, is one clear, distinct, quick, simultaneous view. Infinite knowledge takes in present, past, and future in one comprehensive survey, pierces through all distance at a glance, and collects all ages into the focus of the existing moment.

Once thoroughly grounded and established in this faith and sense of the Divine perfections, we shall never look upon any thing to be so monstrous or so minute, so insignificant or so exorbitant, as to be out of the precincts and controul of eternal Providence. We shall never reduce, if the allusion may be forgiven, the powers of omnipotence to a level with

with that of ſome Indian Rajah who has a territory too unwieldy for his management, or of an Emperor of China who has more ſubjects than one monarch can govern.

We aſk why evil rulers are permitted?— We anſwer, though rather mechanically, our own queſtion, by acknowledging that they are the appointed ſcourges of divine diſpleaſure. Yet God does not delegate his *authority* to the oppreſſor, though he employs him as his inſtrument of correction; he ſtill keeps the reins in his own hand. And beſides that an offending world ſtood in need of the chaſtiſement, theſe black inſtruments who are thus allowed to ravage the earth may be, in the ſcheme of Providence, unintentionally preparing the elements of moral beauty. When Divine diſpleaſure has made barren a fruitful land "for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein," the ploughſhare and the harrow which are ſent to tear up the unproductive ſoil, know not that they are providing for the hand of the ſower, who is following their rude traces in order to ſcatter the ſeeds of future riches and fertility.

Or

Or take the conflagration of a town. — They whofe houfes are burnt are objects of our tendereft commiferation. The fcene, if we beheld it, would alike excite our terror and our pity. But, after we have mourned over the devaftation, and feen that defpair is fruitlefs, at length neceffity impels to induftry; — we fee a new and fairer order of things arife; the convenience, fymmetry, and beauty which fpring out of the afhes make us eventually not only ceafe to regret the deformity and unfightlinefs to which they have fucceeded, but almoft reconcile us to the calamity which has led to the improvement.

Often have the earthquake, the hurricane, the bolt of heaven, kindling and throwing far and wide its baleful light on this earthly ftage, realized in their ultimate effects this image. And we are reminded of a future, general conflagation, "when the elements fhall melt with fervent heat and the earth itfelf fhall be burned up," which is to prove only the fignal and the preparatory fcene

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for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteoufnefs." Let us, in every ftage leading to this final "reftitution of all things," wait with patience for its fure completion. Let us, in the mean time, give credit to the great Author of the book of Fate for the confiftency of its cataftrophe!

When we perufe the compofitions of a human author, we look for unity and confiftency in his whole plan; we expect connection and relation between its feveral parts, and an entirenefs in the general combination. We are not fo much delighted with a fine paffage incidentally introduced, a fhort epifode, of which we difcern at once the rife and the end, and take in all the incidents and beauties at a fingle glance, as we are with the judgment which difcovers itfelf in the diftribution of the whole work, and the fkill, not without difficulty difcerned, which arranges, connects, and, as it were, links together the feveral divifions. Yet do we not fometimes prefume to infinuate as if the great Author of all created nature cannot

reduce the complexity of its parts into one confiftent whole? Do we not intimate objections as if there were no concert, no agreement in the works of the Almighty mind? Do not the fame perfons who can fpeak in raptures of a perfect poem, a perfect fcheme of reafoning, a perfect plan in architecture, yet prefume to fufpect that the concerns of the univerfe are carried on with lefs fyftem, and on a more imperfect defign, than the rude fketches of a frail creature, who is crufhed before the moth?

But if we go fo far as to leave to God the direction of the natural world, becaufe we know not well, after all, to whom elfe to commit its management, yet we frequently make little fcruple to take the government of the moral world into our own hands. If we confent to his ruling matter, we reluctantly allow that he governs mind. We reafon as if we fufpected that the paffions of men lay beyond his controul, and that their vices have overturned his dominion. But we fhould practically call to mind what is the daily language

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of our lips, not only that *His* is "the kingdom," but that the "power" is the fource, and "the glory" the refult of his adminiftration. He does not, it is true, by an arbitrary compulfion of men's minds, rob them of that freedom by which they offend him, nor by a force on their liberty, prevent thofe fins and follies which, if he arbitrarily hindered, he would convert rational beings into mechanical ones; but he turns their fins and follies to fuch ufes, that while by the voluntary commiffion of them they are bringing down deftruction on their own heads, they are not impeding his purpofes.

Nor does Providence in his wide arrangements, exclude the operation of fubordinate caufes and motives, but allows them to affift the greater, and thereby to work his will; as fubalterns in the battle contribute feverally their fhare to the victory, while, like thofe inferior caufes, they are compelled to keep their ranks, and not to afpire to the command. As we have a higher end, we muft have a fupreme direction to our aims. Yet a lower

end is ſometimes made a means to a higher, and aſſiſts its object without uſurping its place. Some who begin by abſtaining from evil, or ſet about doing good from a principle not entirely pure, are graciouſly led to the principle by doing or forbearing the action; and are finally landed at the higher point, from beginnings far below thoſe at which *we* might raſhly have aſſerted they could only ſet out with any hope of ſucceſs.

Though this may not very frequently occur, yet as it is by means God works, rather than by miracles; and as the world does not overflow with real piety, what a chaos would this earth become, if God did not permit inferior motives to operate to a certain degree for the general good! Many, whom the utmoſt ſtretch of charity cannot induce us to believe that they are acting from the pureſt principles, are yet contributing to the comfort and good order of ſociety. Though they are ſober only from a regard to their health, yet their temperance affords a good example; though they are prudent

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from no higher motive than the love of money, yet their frugality keeps them within the ſame bounds as if they were influenced by a better motive; though they may be liberal only to raiſe their reputation, yet their liberality feeds the hungry; though they are public ſpirited merely from ambition, yet their patriotiſm, by rouſing the ſpirit of the country, ſaves it. If ſuch right actions, performed from ſuch low motives, can look for no future retribution;—if, being done without reference to the higheſt end, they do not advance the eternal intereſts of the doer, nor the glory of God, they are yet his inſtruments for promoting the good of others, both by utility and example. On this ground we may be thankful that there is ſo much refinement, generoſity and politeneſs among the higher orders of ſociety, while we confeſs that, tear away the action from its motive, ſunder the virtue from its legitimate reference, the act and the virtue loſe their preſent character and their ultimate reward.

The means by which an infinitely wife God often promotes the moſt important plans, are apt illuſtrations of the blindneſs and obliquity of man's judgment. May we be allowed to offer an inſtance or two, in which human wiſdom would probably have taken a courſe, in the appointment of inſtruments and events, directly oppoſite to that purſued by infinite wiſdom? What earthly judge, if he had been queſtioned as to the means likely to produce one of the ſtrongeſt evidences of the truth of Chriſtianity to unbelievers, but would have named an agreement between Jews and Chriſtians, as its fulleſt corroboration? If we ourſelves had an important cauſe depending—for inſtance, the aſcertaining our right to a litigated eſtate;—If the ſucceſs of the trial depended on the teſtimony of the witneſſes, and on the authenticity of our title-deeds, whoſe teſtimony ſhould we endeavour to obtain; into whoſe hands ſhould we wiſh our vouchers to be committed? According to all human prudence ſhould we not deſire witneſſes who had

had no known hoſtility to us; ſhould we not object to a jury of avowed enemies; and ſhould we not refuſe to lodge our records in the hands of our opponents? But HIS wiſdom, in whoſe ſight ours is folly, has ſeen fit to make one of the moſt ſtriking proofs of the truth of Chriſtianity depend on the living miracle of the enmity of the Jews; "to them alſo were committed the oracles of God," ſo that to both their ancient teſtimony and their preſent oppoſition we are to look for the moſt ſtriking proofs of a religion which they behold with perpetual hatred. And now that Chriſtianity is actually made to ſtand upon ſuch evidence, what teſt can be more ſatisfactory? Reaſon itſelf owns its validity; for what colluſion can now be charged upon the concurrent witneſſes to Chriſtianity, when each party in court is decidedly at variance with the other? Who can rationally queſtion the ſtrength of that title which is contained in their genuine archives—that evidence reſulting from their hereditary denial of facts, of which they per-

ſiſt to reverence the predictions? Where can we more confidently look for the truth of a religion they deteſt, than to the verification conferred on it by their original hiſtory, their irreverſible antipathy, their actual condition, and exiſting character?

To venture another ſpecimen. If *we* had preſumed to point out inſtruments for the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, we ſhould probably have thought none ſo appropriate as Conſtantine: we might have ſuppoſed the firſt chriſtian emperor would have been the fitteſt avenger of the Redeemer's blood. Omniſcience ſelected for the awful retribution a Pagan prince, a virtuous one it is true, but one who ſeemed to have no perſonal intereſt in the buſineſs, one to whom Jews and Chriſtians, as ſuch, were alike indifferent. While this utter deſolation was the obvious accompliſhment of a prophecy, which was to be a laſting evidence of the truth of our religion, the choice of the deſtroyer was one of thoſe "ſecret things which belong to God," and is only to be alleged as a proof that "his ways are not our ways."

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We will advert to another event, the moſt important ſince the incarnation of him whoſe pure worſhip it has reſtored, the Reformation. This occurrence is a peculiarly ſtriking inſtance of our ignorance of the operations of ſupreme wiſdom, and of the means which, to our ſhort ſight, ſeem fit or unfit for the accompliſhment of his purpoſes. If ever the hand of Providence was conſpicuous as the meridian ſun, it was ſo in this mighty work —it was ſo, in the ſelection of apparently diſcordant inſtruments—it was ſo, in over-ruling the deſigns of ſome, to a purpoſe oppoſite to their intention, in making the errors of others contribute to the general end. If this grand ſcheme had been expoſed to *our* review for advice, if *we* had been conſulted in its formation and its progreſs, how ſhould we have criticiſed both the plan and its conductors? How ſhould we have cenſured ſome of the agents as inadequate, condemned others as ill choſen, rejected one as unſuited, another as injurious! One critic would have inſiſted that the vehemence of Luther would mar

any enterprize it might mean to advance; that ſo impetuous a projector would inevitably obſtruct the eſtabliſhment of a religion of meekneſs. Another would have pronounced, that among the human faculties, wit was, of all others, the leaſt likely to aſſiſt the cauſe of piety; yet did Eraſmus, by his exquiſite ſatires on the ignorance and ſuperſtition of the prieſts, as completely contradict this opinion, as Luther, by his magnanimity and heroic perſeverance, triumphantly overturned the other. This inconſiderate, bluſtering Henry, the human counſellor, would have ſaid, will ruin the cauſe, by uniting his hoſtility to the reformers, with his inconſiſtent reſiſtance to the papal power; and yet this cauſe, his very perverſeneſs contributed to promote. Another cenſor would have been quite certain that the timid policy and cautious feeling of Charles the Wiſe would infallibly obſtruct thoſe meaſures which they were actually tending to advance. Who among us, if his opinion had been aſked, would not have fixed on the Pontiff

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of Rome and the Emperor of the Turks, as the laſt human beings to be ſelected for promoting the reformed Religion? Who would have ventured to aſſert that the money raiſed by indulgences, through the profligate venality of Leo, for building Saint Peter's in his own metropolis, was actually laying the foundation of every Proteſtant church, in Britain—in Europe—in the world? Who could have predicted, that the Imperial Muſſulman, in baniſhing learning from his dominions, was preparing, as if by concert, an overwhelming antagoniſt to the ſottiſh ignorance of the Monks? All theſe things, ſeparately conſidered, we, in our captious wiſdom, ſhould have pronounced calculated to produce effects directly contrary to the actual reſult; yet theſe ingredients, which had no natural affinity, amalgamated by the Almighty hand, were made to accompliſh one of the moſt important works that infinite wiſdom, working by human means, has ever effected.

CHAP. III.

Practical Uses of the Doctrine of Providence.

WE do not sufficiently make the doctrine of Providence a practical doctrine.—That the present dark dispensations which afflict the earth are indications of Almighty displeasure few dispute; but having admitted the general fact, who almost does not ascribe the cause of offence to others? How few consider themselves as awfully contributing to draw down the visitation! We look with an exclusive eye to the abandoned and the avowedly profligate, and ascribe the whole weight of the divine indignation to their misdeeds. But we forget that, when a sudden tempest threatened destruction to the ship going to Tarshish, in which there was only Jonah who feared God, those who enquired into the cause of the storm found

him to be the very man. The cauſe of the preſent deſolating ſtorm, as a pious divine obſerved of that which darkened his day, may as probably be the offences of profeſſing Chriſtians, as the preſumptuous ſins of the bolder tranſgreſſor. This apprehenſion ſhould ſet us all on ſearching our hearts, for we cannot repent of the evil of which we are not conſcious. It ſhould put us upon watching againſt negligence; it ſhould ſet us upon diſtruſting a falſe ſecurity, upon examining into the ground of our confidence. No dependence on the goodneſs of our ſpiritual condition, no truſt in our exactneſs in ſome peculiar duties, no fancied ſuperiority of ourſelves to others, no exemption from groſs and palpable diſorders, ſhould ſoothe us into a belief that we have no concern in the viſitation. Throwing off their own guilt upon others was the ſecond ſin of the firſt offenders.

Another practical uſe of the doctrine of Providence is, to enable us to maintain a compoſed frame of ſpirit under his ordinary

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diſpenſations. If we kept up a ſenſe of God's agency in common as well as in extraordinary occurrences—if we were practically perſuaded that nothing happens but by divine appointment, it might ſtill thoſe fluctuations of mind, quiet thoſe uncertainties of temper, conquer that unreaſonable exaltation or depreſſion, which ariſe from our not habitually reflecting that all things are determined in number, or weight, or meaſure by infinite love. If we acted under the full conviction that He who firſt ſet the world in motion governs every creature in it—that we do not take our place upon that ſtage in ſpace, or that period in time, which we chuſe, but where and when *He* pleaſes; that it is he who " ordereth the bounds of our habitation, and fixeth our lot in life," we ſhould not only contemplate with ſober awe the ſtrange events of the age in which we may be living, but cheerfully ſubmit to our individual difficulties, as ariſing from the ſame prediſpoſition of cauſes. Our neglecting to cultivate this train of thought may ac-

count for thofe murmurs which arife in our hearts, both for the public calamities of the world, and the private vexations of life.

If we took God into the account, we ſhould feel that, as rational ſubjects of his moral government, we are bound to ſubmit to it: we ſhould not indulge diſcontent and reſentment at events which we ſhould then allow were either by his appointment or permiſſion, as we now acknowledge in the more extraordinary caſes. But how few are there who think themſelves obliged to endure, without repining, the effects of accident, or the provocations of men? and this is becauſe they ſee only the proximate cauſe, and do not perceive that God is the grand efficient. In our difficulties, if the ſenſe of his preſence were as ſtrongly impreſſed upon us as the trial is powerfully felt, it would make the heart ſtrong, and render the temptation feeble. Nor would it only ſtrengthen us under temptation, but ſuſtain us under affliction; we ſhould become both humble by correction, and patient under it;

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we ſhould be grateful in proſperity, without being elated by it. A deep conviction of God's authority over us, and his property in us, would alſo make us kind to others as an acknowledgment that all is his. The very Heathen entertained ſome ſenſe of his ſovereignty; they acknowledged at leaſt their victories to proceed from him, when they dedicated their ſpoils *to the deliverer*.

If we maintained this conſtant ſenſe of his providential government, we ſhould be more inſtant in prayer, we ſhould more fervently ſupplicate him in our diſtreſſes, and more devoutly adore him for his mercies. The recognition of his ſovereignty infers the duty of prayer to him, of implicit truſt in him, of unqualified ſubmiſſion to him; for the ſame argument which proves that he ſhould govern, makes it right that we ſhould obey; and the avowal of that obedience is alike conſiſtent with the character of the ſubject, and the claims of the ſovereign. Thus uſed, there is no conſolation to an afflicted world like that which is derived from the poſition

contained in the proclamation of the imperial penitent of Babylon, "that the most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men;" that he ruleth not by an arbitrary will, but, to borrow the emphatical language of the Apocalyse, by the perfections of THE MIND THAT HATH WISDOM.

But, as we seem virtually to divide the affairs of the world into two portions, we talk as if we did not think certain ordinary trials considerable enough to come from God, nor of course to require that we should meet them with temper. Under these, therefore, we make ourselves what amends we can for the vexation of trials more severe, by indulging fretfulness, secure of impunity. But let us be assured of these two things, if it be a trial at all, it comes from God; if it disturb our peace, however trivial in itself, it is not small to us, and therefore claims submission. It is worth our observation that they who are ready to quarrel with Omnipotence for the infliction of pain and suffering, poverty and distress, seldom arraign him

him for their intellectual or moral deficiencies. Most men are better satisfied with their allotment of capacity than of health; of virtue, than of riches; of skill, than of power. We seldom grudgingly compare our mental endowments with those of others who are obviously more highly gifted, while we are sufficiently forward to repine at their superiority in worldly advantages. Though too sensibly alive to the narrower limits in which our fortune is confined, we do not lament our severer restrictions in the article of personal merit. In the latter instance vanity supports as completely as in the former envy disturbs.

Most of the calamities of human life originate with ourselves. Even sickness, shame, pain, and death were not originally the infliction of God. But out of many evils, whether sent us by his immediate hand, or brought on us by our own faults, much eventual good is educed by Him, who by turning our suffering to our benefit, repairs by grace the evils produced by sin. Without

out being the author of evil, the bare ſuggeſtion of which is blaſphemy, he converts it to his own glory, by cauſing the effects of it to promote our good. If the virtuous ſuffer from the crimes of the wicked, it is becauſe their imperfect goodneſs ſtood in need of chaſtiſement. Even the wicked, who are ſuffering by their own ſins, or the ſins of each other, are ſometimes brought back to God by mutual injuries, the ſenſe of which awakens them to compunction for their own offences. God makes uſe of the faults even of good men to ſhew them their own inſufficiency, to abaſe them in their own eyes, to cure them of vanity and ſelf-dependence. He makes uſe of their ſmaller failings, to ſet them on the watch againſt great ones; of their imperfections, to put them on their guard againſt ſins; of their faults of inadvertency, to increaſe their dread of ſuch as are wilful. This ſuperinduced vigilance teaches them to fear all the reſemblances, and to ſhun all the approaches to ſin. It is a ſalutary fear, which keeps them from

from uſing all the liberty they have; it leads them to avoid, not only whatever is decidedly wrong, but to ſtop ſhort of what is doubtful, to keep clear of what is ſuſpicious; well knowing the thin partitions which ſeparate danger from deſtruction. It teaches them to watch the buddings and germinations of evil, to anticipate the pernicious fruit in the opening bloſſom.

The weakneſs and inactivity of our faith expoſe us to continual diſtruſt. When we ourſelves are idle, we are diſpoſed to ſuſpect that the Omnipotent is not at work. That proceſs which we do not ſee, we are too much inclined to ſuſpect is not going on. From this unhallowed egotiſm, where we are not the prime movers, we fancy that all ſtands ſtill. The various parts of the ſcheme of Providence are ſometimes connected by a thread ſo fine as to elude our dim ſight; but, though it may be ſo attenuated as to be inviſible, it is never broken off. The plan is carrying on, and the work, perhaps, about to be accompliſhed, while

while we are accufing the Great Artificer, as if he were capable of neglect, or liable to error. But if, after tracing Providence through many a labyrinth, we feem to lofe fight of him: if, after having loft our clue, we are tempted to fufpect that his operation is fufpended, or that his agency has ceafed, he is working all the time out of fight — he is proceeding, if the comparifon may be allowed, like the fabled Arethufa, whofe ftream having difappeared in the place to which it had been followed up, is ftill making its way under ground; though we are not cured of our incredulity, till we again difcover him, burfting forth like the fame river, which, having purfued its hidden paffage through every obftruction, rifes once more in all its beauty in another and an unexpected place.

But even while we are rebelling againft his difpenfations, we are taking our hints in the economy of public and private life, from the economy of Providence in the adminiftration of the world. We govern our country

country by laws emulative of thoſe by which he governs his creatures:—we train our children by probationary diſcipline, as he trains his ſervants. Penal laws in ſtates, like thoſe of the Divine Legiſlator, indicate no hatred to thoſe to whom they are proclaimed, for every man is at liberty not to break them; they are enacted in the firſt inſtance for admonition rather than chaſtiſement, and ſerve as much for prevention as puniſhment. The diſcipline maintained in all well-ordered families is intended not only to promote their virtue, but their happineſs. The intelligent child perceives his father's motive for reſtraining him, till the act of obedience having induced the habit, and both having broken in his rebellious will, he loves the parent the more for the reſtraint: on the other hand, the miſmanaged and ruined ſon learns to deſpiſe the father, who has given him a licence to which he has diſcernment enough to perceive he owes the miſeries conſequent upon his uncurbed appetites.

It is however to be lamented, that this great doctrine of God's universal superintendence is not only madly denied, or inconsistently overlooked by one class of men, but is foolishly perverted, or fanatically abused by another. Without entering upon the wide field of instances, we shall confine our remarks to two that are the most common. First, the fanciful, frivolous and bold familiarity with which this supreme dictation and government are cited on the most trivial occasions, and adduced in a manner dishonourable to infinite wisdom, and derogatory to supreme goodness. The persons who are guilty of this fault seem not to perceive, that it is not more foolish and presumptuous to deny it altogether than to expect that God's particular Providence will interpose, in order to save their exertions, or excuse their industry. For though Providence directs and assists virtuous endeavours, he never, by superceding them, encourages idleness, or justifies presumption.

The highly cenſurable uſe to which ſome others convert this divine agency, is, when not only the pretence of truſting Providence is made the plea for the indolent deſertion of their own duty; but an unwarrantable confidence in providential leadings is adopted to excuſe their own imprudence. Great is the temerity, when Providence is virtually reproached for the ill ſucceſs of our affairs, or pleaded as an apology for our own wilfulneſs, or as a vindication of our own abſurdity, in the failure of ſome fooliſh plan, or ſome irrational purſuit. We have no right to depend on a ſupernatural interpoſition to help us out of difficulties into which we have been thrown by our miſconduct, or under diſtreſſes into which we have been plunged by our errors. God, though he knows the prayers which we may offer, and accepts the penitence which we feel, will not uſe his power to correct our ill-judged labours, any otherwiſe than by making us ſmart for their conſequences.

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The power of God, as it is not an idle, ſo it is not a ſolitary prerogative. It is indeed an attribute in conſtant exerciſe; it is not kept for ſtate, but uſe; not for diſplay, but exerciſe; and as it is infinite, one half of the concerns of the univerſe are not, as we intimated before, ſuſpended, becauſe he is ſuperintending the other half. He is perpetually examining the chronicles of human kind, and inſpecting the regiſter of human actions — not like the King in the Palace of Shuſhan *, becauſe "he cannot reſt," for Omniſcience never ſlumbers or ſleeps — nor like him to repair the wrongs of one man whoſe ſervices had remained unrequited, but that, "beholding the evil and the good," no ſervices may go unnoticed and unrecompenſed, from the earlieſt offering of pious Abel, to the lateſt oblation of faith in the end of time.

This view of things, and it is the view which the enlightened Chriſtian takes, tends to correct his anger againſt ſecond cauſes, and affords him ſuch an aſſurance that every

* Ahaſuerus.—Eſther, chap. 6.

occurrence will be over-ruled by everlafting love for his eventual good — infpires him with fuch holy confidence in the promifes of the Gofpel, that he acquires a repofe of fpirit, not merely from compelled fubmiffion to authority, but from rational acquiefcence in goodnefs. He feels that his confirmed belief in this univerfal agency is the only thing that can fet his heart at reft, ftill its perturbations, moderate its impatience, foothe its terrors, confirm its faith, preferve its peace, or, when it has fuffered a momentary fufpenfion, reftore it.

Nor does God exercife his Providence alone, either in fignal inftances of retribution, or in the hidden confolations of the believer; but thofe fecret ftings of confcience which goad and lacerate every guilty individual in any criminal purfuit — that lurking difcontent which gives the lie to flattery, and mingles the note of difcord with the mufic of acclamation—that unprompted mifery of feeling which infufes wormwood into his fweeteft pleafures, proceeds from the fame providential infliction.

Some

Some men ſeem to admit a Providence on a ſcale which expands their ideas, but fancy it an affront to conceive of Him on one which they think contracts them. If they allow that he takes a ſweeping view of nations, yet they imply that it would be too minute an exerciſe of his ſuperintendence to inſpect individuals. The truth is, as we intimated before, men are too much diſpoſed to frame their conceptions of God by the limited powers and capacities of human greatneſs. They obſerve, that a king who controuls the affairs of a vaſt empire cannot poſſibly inſpect the concerns of every private family, much leſs of every ſingle ſubject. This limited capacity they unconſciouſly, yet irreverently, transfer to the King of kings. But as no concern is ſo vaſt as to encumber Omnipotence, ſo none is too diminutive to eſcape the eye of Omniſcience. There is no argument for a general, but is alſo an argument for a particular Providence, unleſs we

can prove that the whole is not made up of parts; that generals are not compoſed of particulars; that nations are not compounded of families; that ſocieties are not formed of individuals; that chains are not compoſed of links; that ſums are not made up of units; that the intereſts of a community do not grow out of the well-being of its members. The intereſts of a particular member, indeed, may ſometimes appear to ſuffer from that which promotes the general good, yet he, by whoſe law the individual may ſeem to be injured, has means of remuneration or of comfort which may prevent the ſufferer from being ultimately a loſer. If, as we are aſſured upon his own authority, our tears are treaſured up by him, will not their appropriate conſolations be alſo provided? Though God, *whoſe footſteps are not known*, may act in ſome inſtances in a manner incomprehenſible to us, yet if we allow that he acts wiſely and holily in caſes which we do comprehend, we ſhould give him credit in the obſcure and

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impenetrable cafes, for he can no more act contrary to his attributes in the one inftance than in the other.

Every intelligent being, therefore, fhould look up to divine Providence, not only as engaged in the government and difpofal of ftates, but as exercifed for his individual protection, peace and comfort; — fhould look habitually to Him who confers favour without claim, and happinefs without merit; to Him whofe veracity fulfils all the promifes which his goodnefs has made—to Him whofe pity commiferates the afflicted, whofe bounty fupplies the indigent, whofe long fuffering bears with the rebellious, whofe love abfolves the guilty, whofe mercy in Chrift Jefus accepts the penitent. Such is the fullnefs of that attribute which we fum up in a fingle word, *the goodnefs of God*. It is this goodnefs which influences his other attributes in our favour, attributes which would elfe neceffarily act againft creatures at once finful and impotent. It makes that wifdom which

which ſees our weakneſs, ſtrengthen us, and that power which might overwhelm us, act for our preſervation. Without this goodneſs, all his other perfections would be to us as the beauties of his natural creation would be, if the ſun were blotted from the firmament—they might indeed exiſt, but without this illuminating and cheriſhing principle, as we ſhould neither have ſeen nor felt them, ſo to us they could not be ſaid *to be.*

Some Chriſtians ſeem to view the Almighty as encircled with no attribute but his ſovereignty. God, in eſtabliſhing his moral government, might indeed have acted *ſolely* by his ſovereignty. He might have pleaded no other reaſon for our allegiance but his abſolute dominion. He might have governed arbitrarily, without explaining the nature of his requiſitions: He might have reigned over us as a king, without endearing himſelf to us as a father. He might have exacted fealty, without the offer of remuneration.

ration. Inſtead of this, while he maintains his entire title to our obedience, he mitigates the auſterity of command by the invitations of his kindneſs, and ſoftens the rigour of authority by the allurement of his promiſes. In holding out menaces to deter us from diſobedience, he balances them with the offered plenitude of our own felicity, and thus inſtead of terrifying, attracts us to obedience. If he threatens,—it is that by intimidating he may be ſpared the neceſſity of puniſhing; if he promiſes,—it is that we may perceive our happineſs to be bound up with our obedience. Thus his goodneſs invites us to a compliance, which his ſovereignty might have demanded on the ſingle ground that it was his due. Whereas he ſeems almoſt to wave our duty as a claim, as if to afford us the merit of a voluntary obedience; though the very will to obey is his gift, he promiſes to reward it as if it were our own act. Thus his power, if we may hazard the expreſſion, gives place to his goodneſs, and he preſſes us by tender-

nefs almoft more than he conftrains us by authority. He even condefcends to make our happinefs no lefs a motive for our duty than his injunctions; hear his affectionate apoftrophe,—"Oh that thou hadft hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river!"

It was that his goodnefs might have the precedency of his Omnipotence, that he vouchfafed to give the Law in the fhape of a covenant. He ftooped to enter into a fort of reciprocal engagement with his creatures,—he condefcended to ftipulate with the work of his hands! But the confummation of his goodnefs was referved for his work of Redemption. Here he not only performed the office, but affumed the name of LOVE; a name with which, notwithftanding all his preceding wonders of Providence and Grace, he was never invefted till after the completion of this laft, greateft act:—an act towards his pardoned rebels, not only of indemnity but promotion;—an act

act which the angels desire to scrutinize, and which man will never fully comprehend till he enters on that beatitude to which it has introduced him.

CHAP. IV.

" *Thy Will be done.*"

TO desire to know the Divine will is the first duty of a being so ignorant as man; to endeavour to obey it is the most indispensable duty of a being at once so corrupt and so dependant. The Holy Scriptures frequently comprize the essence of the Christian temper in some short aphorism, apostrophe, or definition. The essential spirit of the Christian life may be said to be included in this one brief petition of the Christian's prayer, "THY WILL BE DONE;" just as the distinguishing characteristic of the irreligious may be said to consist in following his own will.

There is a haughty spirit which, though it will not complain, does not care to submit. It arrogates to itself the dignity of enduring, without any claim to the meekness of yielding. Its silence is stubbornness,

its fortitude is pride; its calmneſs is apathy without, and diſcontent within. In ſuch characters it is not ſo much the will of God which is the rule of conduct, as the ſcorn of puſillanimity. Not ſeldom indeed the mind puts in a claim for a merit to which the nerves could make out a better title. Yet the ſuffering which ariſes from acute feeling is ſo far from deducting from the virtue of reſignation, that, when it does not impede the ſacrifice, it enhances the value. True reſignation is the hardeſt leſſon in the whole ſchool of Chriſt. It is the ofteneſt taught and the lateſt learnt. It is not a taſk which, when once got over in ſome particular inſtance, leaves us maſter of the ſubject. The neceſſity of following up the leſſon we have begun, preſents itſelf almoſt every day in ſome new ſhape, occurs under ſome freſh modification. The ſubmiſſion of yeſterday, does not exonerate us from the reſignation of to-day. The principle, indeed, once thoroughly wrought into the ſoul, gradually reconciles us to the frequent demand

for its exercife, and renders every fucceffive call more eafy.

We read differtations on this fubject, not only with the moft entire concurrence of the judgment, but with the moft apparent acquiefcence of the mind. We write effays upon it in the hour of peace and compofure, and fancy that what we have difcuffed with fo much eafe and felf-complacence, in favour of which we offer fo many arguments to convince and fo many motives to perfuade, cannot be very difficult to practife. But to convince the underftanding and to correct the will is a very different undertaking; and not lefs difficult when it comes to our own cafe than it was in the cafe of thofe for whom we have been fo coolly and dogmatically prefcribing. It is not till we practically find how flowly our own arguments produce any effect on ourfelves that we ceafe to marvel at their inefficacy on others. The fick phyfician taftes with difguft the bitternefs of the draught, to the fwallowing of which he wondered the patient had felt fo much re-

pugnance;

pugnance; nay the reader is ſometimes convinced by the arguments which fail of their effect on the writer, when he is called, not to diſcuſs, but to act, not to reaſon, but to ſuffer. The theory is ſo juſt and the duty ſo obvious, that even bad men aſſent to it; the exerciſe ſo trying that the beſt men find it more eaſy to commend the rule than to adopt it. But he who has once gotten engraved, not in his memory but in his heart, this divine precept, THY WILL BE DONE, has made a proficiency which will render all ſubſequent inſtruction comparatively eaſy.

Though ſacrifices and oblations were offered to God under the law by his own expreſs appointment, yet he peremptorily rejected them by his prophets, when preſented as ſubſtitutes inſtead of ſigns. Will he, under a more perfect diſpenſation, accept of any obſervances which are meant to ſuperſede internal dedication — of any offerings unaccompanied by complete deſire of acquieſcence in his will? "My ſon, give me thine heart," is his brief but imperative command.

command. But before we can be brought to comply with the ſpirit of this requiſition, God muſt enlighten our underſtanding that our devotion may be rational, he muſt rectify our will that it may be voluntary, he muſt purify our heart that it may be ſpiritual.

Submiſſion is a duty of ſuch high and holy import that it can only be learnt of the Great Teacher. If it could have been acquired by mere moral inſtitution, the wiſe ſayings of the ancient philoſophers would have taught it. But their moſt elevated ſtandard was low; their ſtrongeſt motives were the brevity of life, the inſtability of fortune, the dignity of ſuffering virtue, things within their narrow ſphere of judging; things true indeed as far as they go, but a ſubſtratum by no means equal to the ſuperſtructure to be built on it. It wanted depth and ſtrength and ſolidity for the purpoſes of ſupport. It wanted the only true baſis, the aſſurance that God orders all things according to the purpoſes of his will

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for our final good; it wanted that only ſure ground of faith by which the genuine Chriſtian chearfully ſubmits in entire dependance on the promiſes of the Goſpel.

Nor let us fancy that we are to be languid and inactive recipients of the divine diſpenſations. Our own ſouls muſt be enlarged, our own views muſt be ennobled, our own ſpirit muſt be dilated. An inoperative acquieſcence is not all that is required of us: — and if we muſt not ſlacken our zeal in doing good, ſo we muſt not be remiſs in oppoſing evil, on the flimſy ground that God has permitted evil to infeſt the world. If it be his will to permit ſin, it is an oppoſition to his will when we do not labour to counteract it. This ſurrender, therefore, of our will to that of God, takes in a large ſweep of actual duties, as well as the whole compaſs of paſſive obedience. It involves doing as well as ſuffering, activity as well as acquieſcence, zeal as well as forbearance. Yet the conciſe petition daily ſlips off the tongue without our reflecting on the weight of the

obligation

obligation we are impofing on ourfelves. We do not confider the extent and confequences of the prayer we are offering, the facrifices, the trials, the privations it may involve, and the large indefinite obedience to all the known and unknown purpofes of infinite wifdom to which we are pledging ourfelves.

There is no cafe in which we more fhelter ourfelves in generalities. Verbal facrifices coft little, coft nothing. The familiar habit of repeating the petition almoft tempts us to fancy that the duty is as eafy as the requeft is fhort. We are ready to think that a prayer rounded in four monofyllables can fcarcely involve duties co-extenfive with our whole courfe of being; that, in uttering them, we renounce all right in ourfelves, that we acknowledge the univerfal indefeafible title of *the bleffed and only Potentate*; that we make over to Him the right to do in us, and with us, and by us, whatever he fees good for ourfelves, whatever will promote his glory, though by means fometimes

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as incomprehenſible to our underſtanding, as unacceptable to our will, becauſe we neither know the motive, nor perceive the end. Theſe ſimple words expreſs an act of faith the moſt ſublime, an act of allegiance the moſt unqualified; and, while they make a declaration of entire ſubmiſſion to a Sovereign the moſt abſolute, they are, at the ſame time, a recognition of love to a Father the moſt beneficent.

We muſt remember, that in offering this prayer, we may, by our own requeſt, be offering to reſign what we moſt dread to loſe, to give up what is dear to us as our own ſoul; we may be calling on our heavenly Father to withhold what we are moſt anxiouſly labouring to attain, and to withdraw what we are moſt ſeduloully endeavouring to keep. We are renouncing our property in ourſelves, we are diſtinctly making ourſelves over again to Him whoſe we already are. We ſpecifically entreat him to do with us what he pleaſes, to mould us to a conformity to his image, without which we ſhall never be reſigned to his will. In

ſhort,

ſhort, to diſpoſe of us as his infinite wiſdom ſees beſt, however contrary to the ſcheme which our blindneſs has laid down as the path to unqueſtionable happineſs.

To render this trying petition eaſy to us, is one great reaſon why God, by ſuch a variety of providences, afflicts and brings us low. He knows that we want incentives to humility, even more than incitements to virtuous actions. He ſhews us in many ways, that ſelf-ſufficiency and happineſs are incompatible; that pride and peace are irreconcileable; that, following our own way, and doing our own will, which we conceive to be of the very eſſence of felicity, is in direct oppoſition to it.

"Chriſtianity," ſays Biſhop Horſeley, "involves many paradoxes, but no contradictions." To be able to ſay with entire ſurrender of the heart, "Thy will be done," is the true liberty of the children of God, that liberty with which Chriſt has made them free. It is a liberty, not which delivers us from reſtraint, but which, free-

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ing us from our ſubjection to the ſenſes, makes us find no pleaſure but in order, no ſafety but in the obedience of an intelligent being to his rightful Lord. In delivering us from the heavy bondage of ſin, it transfers us to the "eaſy yoke of Chriſt," from the galling ſlavery of the world to the "light burden" of him who overcame it.

This liberty in giving a true direction to the affections, gives them amplitude as well as elevation. The more unconſtrained the will becomes, the more it fixes on one object; once fixed on the higheſt, it does not uſe its liberty for verſatility, but for conſtancy; not for change, but fidelity; not for wavering, but adherence.

It is, therefore, no leſs our intereſt, than our duty, to keep the mind in an habitual poſture of ſubmiſſion. "Adam," ſays Dr. Hammond, "after his expulſion, was a greater ſlave in the wilderneſs than he had been in the incloſure." If the barbarian ambaſſador came expreſsly to the Romans to negotiate from his country for permiſſion to be

be their ſervants, declaring, that a voluntary ſubmiſſion, even to a foreign power, was preferable to a wild and dſſorderly freedom, well may the Chriſtian triumph in the peace and ſecurity to be attained by a complete ſubjugation to Him who is emphatically called *the God of order*.

A vital faith manifeſts itſelf in vital acts. "Thy will be done," is eminently a practical petition. The firſt indication of the gaoler's change of heart was a practical indication. He did not aſk, "Are there few that be ſaved," but, "What ſhall *I* do to be ſaved?" The firſt ſymptom St. Paul gave of his converſion, was a practical ſymptom: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He entered on his new courſe with a total renunciation of his own will. It ſeemed to this great Apoſtle, to be the turning point between infidelity and piety, whether he ſhould follow his own will, or the will of God. He did not amuſe his curioſity with ſpeculative queſtions. His own immediate and grand concern engroſſed

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his whole ſoul. Nor was his queſtion a mere haſty effuſion, an interrogative ſpringing out of that mixed feeling of awe and wonder which accompanied his firſt overwhelming convictions. It became the abiding principle which governed his future life, which made him in labours more abundant. Every ſucceſſive act of duty, every future ſacrifice of eaſe, ſprung from it, was influenced by it. His own will, his ardent, impetuous, fiery will, was not merely ſubdued, it was extinguiſhed. His powerful mind indeed loſt none of its energy, but his proud heart relinquiſhed all its independence.

We allow and adopt the term *devotion* as an indiſpenſable part of religion, becauſe it is ſuppoſed to be limited to the act; but *devotedneſs*, from which it is derived, does not meet with ſuch ready acceptation, becauſe this is a habit, and an habit involves more than an act; it pledges us to conſiſtency, it implies fixedneſs of character, a general confirmed ſtate of mind, a giving up what we are, and have, and do, to God.

Devotedneſs

Devotedneſs does not conſiſt in the length of our prayers, nor in the number of our good works, for, though theſe are the ſureſt evidences of piety, they are not its eſſence. Devotedneſs conſiſts in doing and ſuffering, bearing and forbearing in the way which God preſcribes. The moſt inconſiderable duty performed with alacrity, if it oppoſe our own inclination; the moſt ordinary trial met with a right ſpirit, is more acceptable to him than a greater effort of our own deviſing. We do not commend a ſervant for his activity, if ever ſo fervently exerciſed, in doing whatever gratifies his own fancy: we do not conſider his performance as obedience, unleſs his activity has been exerciſed in doing what we required of him. Now, how can we inſiſt on his doing what contradicts his own humour, while we allow ourſelves to feel repugnance in ſerving our heavenly Maſter, when his commands do not exactly fall in with our own inclination?

We muſt alſo give God leave, not only to take his own way, but his own time. The

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appointment of ſeaſons, as well as of events, is his. "He waits to be gracious." If he delays, it is becauſe we are not yet brought to that ſtate which fits us for the grant of our requeſt. It is not he who muſt be brought about, but we ourſelves. Or, perhaps, he refuſes the thing we aſk, in order to give us a better. We implore ſucceſs in an undertaking, inſtead of which, he gives us content under the diſappointment. We aſk for the removal of pain; he gives us patience under it. We deſire deliverance from our enemies; he ſees that we have not yet turned their enmity to our improvement, and he will bring us to a better temper by further exerciſe. We deſire him to avert ſome impending trial, inſtead of averting it, he takes away its bitterneſs; he mitigates what we believed would be intolerable, by giving us a right temper under it. How, then, can we ſay he has failed of his promiſe, if he gives ſomething more truly valuable than we had requeſted at his hands?

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Some virtues are more called out in one condition of life, and ſome in another. The exerciſe of certain qualities has its time and place; but an endeavour after conformity to the image of God, which is beſt attained by ſubmiſſion to his will, is of perpetual obligation. If he does not require all virtues under all circumſtances, there is no ſtate or condition, in which he does not require that to which our church perpetually calls us, "an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart." We may have no time, no capacity, no ſpecial call for deeds of notorious uſefulneſs; but whatever be our purſuits, engagements, or abilities, it will intrench on no time, require no ſpecific call, interfere with no duty, to ſubdue our perverſe will. Though the moſt ſevere of all duties it infringes on no other, but will be the more effectually fulfilled by the very difficulties attending on other purſuits and engagements.

We are ſo fond of having our own will that it is aſtoniſhing we do not oftener employ

ploy it for our own good; for our inward peace is augmented in exact proportion as our repugnance to the Divine will diminishes. Were the conquest over the one complete, the enjoyment of the other would be perfect. But the Holy Spirit does not assume his emphatical title, the COMFORTER, till his previous offices have operated on the heart, till he has "reproved us of sin, of righteousness, of judgment."

God makes use of methods inconceivable to us, to bring us to the submission which we are more ready to request with our lips, than to desire with our hearts. By an imperceptible operation he is ever at work for our good; he promotes it by objects the most unpromising, by events the most unlikely. He employs means to our shallow views the most improbable to effect his own gracious purposes. In every thing he evinces that his thoughts are not as our thoughts. He overrules the opposition of our enemies, the defection of our friends, the faults of our children — the loss of our fortune as

well as the disappointments attending its possession — the unsatisfactoriness of pleasures as well as the privation — the contradiction of our desires — the failure of plans which we thought we had concerted, not only with good judgment but pure intentions. He makes us sensible of our faults by the mischiefs they bring upon us; and acknowledge our blindness, by extracting from it consequences diametrically opposite to those which our actions were intended to produce.

Our love to God is stamped with the same imperfection with all our other graces. If we love him at all, it is as it were traditionally, hereditarily, professionally; it is a love of form and not of feeling, of education and not of sentiment, of sense and not of faith. It is at best a submission to authority, and not an effusion of voluntary gratitude, a conviction of the understanding, and not a cordiality of the affections. We rather assume we have this grace than actually possess it, we rather take it for granted on unex-

unexamined grounds, than cherifh it as a principle from which whatever good we have muft proceed, and from which, if it does not proceed, the principle does not exift.

Surely, fay the oppugners of divine Providence, in confidering the calamities inflicted on good men, if God loved virtue he would not opprefs the virtuous. Surely Omnipotence may find a way to make his children good, without making them miferable. — But have thefe cafuifts ever devifed a means by which men may be made good without being made humble, or happy without being made holy, or holy without trials? Unapt fcholars indeed we are in learning the leffons taught! But the Teacher is not the lefs perfect becaufe of the imbecility of his children.

If it be the defign of Infinite Goodnefs to difengage us from the world, to detach us from ourfelves, and to purify us to himfelf, the purification by fufferings feems the moft obvious method. The fame effect

could not be any otherwife produced, except by miracles, and God is an economift of his means in grace as well as in nature. He deals out all his gifts by meafure. His operation in both is progreffive. Succeffive events operate in one cafe as time and age in the other. As funs and fhowers fo gradually mature the fruits of the earth, that the growth is rather perpetual than perceptible, fo God commonly carries on the work of renovation in the heart filently and flowly, by means fuitable and fimple, though to us imperceptible, and fometimes unintelligible. Were the plans more obvious, and the procefs oftenfible, there would be no room left for the operations of faith, no call for the exercife of patience, no demand for the grace of humility. The road to perfection is tedious and fuffering, fteep and rugged; our impatience would leap over all the intervening fpace which keeps us from it, rather than climb it by flow and painful fteps. We would fain be fpared the forrow and fhame of our own errors, of all their vexatious obftructions, all their difhonour-

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able impediments. We would be completely good and happy at once without paſſing through the ſtages and gradations which lead to goodneſs and happineſs. We require an inſtantaneous transformation which would coſt us nothing; the ſpirit of God works by a gradual proceſs which coſts us much. We would combine his favour with our ſelf-indulgence; we would be ſpared the trials he has appointed without loſing the felicity he has promiſed. We complain of the ſeverity of the operation, but the operation would not be ſo ſevere if the diſeaſe did not lie ſo deep.

Beſides the afflictions which God appoints, are not ſeldom ſent to ſave us from thoſe we ſhould bring on ourſelves, and which might have added guilt to miſery. He preſcribes, but it is that he may finally ſave. If "puniſhment is his ſtrange," it is alſo his neceſſary "work." Even in the soreſt affliction, the loſs of thoſe we love, there may be a mercy impenetrable to us. God has, perhaps, laid up for us in heaven that

friend whom we might have loſt in eternity, had he been reſtored to our prayers here.— But if the affliction be not improved, it is, indeed, unſpeakably heavy. If the loſs of our friend does not help to detach us from the world, we have the calamity without the indemnification; we are deprived of our treaſure without any advantage to ourſelves. If the loſs of him we loved does not make us more earneſt to ſecure our ſalvation, we may loſe at once our friend and our ſoul. To endure the penalty and loſe the profit, is to be emphatically miſerable.

Sufferings are the only relics of the true croſs, and when Divine grace turns them to our ſpiritual good, they almoſt perform the miracles which blind ſuperſtition aſcribes to the falſe one. God mercifully takes from us what we have not courage to offer him; but if, when he reſumes it, he ſanctifies the loſs, let us not repine. It was his while it was ours. He was the proprietor while we were the poſſeſſors.

Though we profeſs a general readineſs to ſubmit to the Divine will, there is

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nothing in which we are more liable to illusion. Self-love is a subtle casuist. We invent distinctions. We too critically discriminate between afflictions which proceed more immediately from God, and disappointments which come from the world. To the former we acknowledge, in words at least, our willingness to submit. In the latter, though equally his dispensation, we seem to feel justified in refusing to acquiesce. God does not desire us to inflict punishments on ourselves, he only expects us to bear with patience those he inflicts on us, whether they come more immediately from himself or through the medium of his creatures.

Love being the root of obedience, it is no test of that obedience if we obey God only in things which do not cross our inclinations, while we disobey him in things that are repugnant to them. Not to obey except when it costs us nothing is rather to please ourselves than God, for it is evident we should disobey him in these also if the allurement were equally powerful in these cases

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as in the others. We may, indeed, plead in apology that the command we refift is of lefs importance than that with which we comply; but this is a falfe excufe, for the authority which enjoins the leaft, is the fame with that which commands the greateft; and it is the authority to which we are to fubmit, as much as to the command.

There is a paffage in St. Luke which does not feem to be always brought to bear on this point as fully as it ought: "Unlefs a man forfake all that he hath, he cannot be my difciple." This does not feem to be quite identical with the command in another place, that "a man fhould fell all that he has," &c. When the Chriftian world, indeed, was in its infancy, the literal requifition in both cafes was abfolutely neceffary. But it appears to be a more liberal interpretation of the command, as "forfaking" all that we have, extends to a full and entire confecration of ourfelves to God, a dedication without referve, not of fortune only, but of every defire, every faculty, every inclination,

tion, every talent, a resignation of the whole will, a surrender of the whole soul. It is this surrender which *alone sanctifies* our best actions. It is this pure oblation, this offering of unshared affection, this unmaimed sacrifice, which is alone acceptable to God, through *that full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction*, made for the sins of the whole world. Our money he will not accept without our good will, our devotions without our affections, our services without our hearts. Like the prevaricating pair, whose duplicity was punished by instant death, whatever we keep back will annihilate the value of what we bring. It will be nothing if it be not all.*

* Acts, chap. v.

CHAP. V.

On Parable.

IT is obvious, that the reaſon why mankind, in general, are ſo much delighted with allegory and metaphor, is, becauſe they are ſo proportioned to our ſenſes, thoſe firſt inlets of ideas. Ideas gained by the ſenſes quickly paſs into the region of the imagination; and from thence, more particularly the illiterate and uninformed, fetch materials for the employment of their reaſon.

Little reaches the underſtanding of the maſs but through this medium. Their minds are not fitted for the reception of abſtract truth. Dry augmentative inſtruction, therefore, is not proportioned to their capacity; the faculty by which a right concluſion is drawn, is, in them, the moſt defective; they rather feel ſtrongly than judge accurately;

rately; and their feelings are awakened by the impreſſion made on their ſenſes.

The connection of theſe remarks with the ſubject of inſtruction by parable, is obvious. It is the nature of parable to open the doctrine which it profeſſes to conceal. By engaging attention and exciting curioſity, it developes truth with more effect than by a more explicit expoſition. By laying hold on the imagination, parable inſinuates itſelf into the affections, and, by the intercommunication of the faculties, the underſtanding apprehends the truth which was propoſed to the fancy.

There is commonly found ſufficient rectitude of judgment in the generality to decide fairly on any point within their reach of mind, if the deciſion neither oppoſes their intereſt nor interferes with their prejudice. If you can ſeparate the truth from any perſonal concern of their own, their verdict will probably be juſt; but if their views are clouded by paſſion, or biaſſed by ſelfiſhneſs, that man muſt poſſeſs a more than ordinary

degree of integrity who decides againſt himſelf and in favour of what is right.

In the admirably deviſed parable of Nathan, David's eager condemnation of the unſuſpected offender is a ſtriking inſtance of the deluſion of ſin and the blindneſs of ſelf-love. He who had lived a whole year in the unrepented commiſſion of one of the blackeſt crimes of the decalogue, and who, to ſecure to himſelf the object for which he had committed it, perpetrated another almoſt more heinous, and that with an hypocriſy foreign to his character, could in an inſtant denounce death on the imaginary offender for a fault comparatively trifling. The vehemence of his reſentment even overſtepped the limits of his natural juſtice, in decreeing a puniſhment diſproportioned to the crime, while he remained dead to his own deep delinquency. A pointed parable inſtantly ſurpriſed him into the moſt bitter ſelf-reproach. A direct accuſation might have inflamed him before he was thus prepared; and, in the one caſe, he might have

punished the accuser, by whom, in the other, he was brought to the deepest self-abasement. The prudent prophet did not rashly reproach the King with the crime he wished him to condemn, but placed the fault at such a distance, and in such a proper point of view, that he first procured his impartial judgment, and afterwards his self-condemdation. An important lesson, not only to the offender, but to the reprover.

He "who knew what was in man," and who intended his religion, not for a few critics to argue upon, but for a whole world to act upon, frequently adopted the mode of instructing by allegory. Though he sometimes condescended to unveil the hidden sense, by disclosing the moral meaning, in some short, but most significant comment; yet he usually left the application to those whom he meant to benefit by the doctrine. The truth which spoke strongly to their prejudices, by the veil in which it was wrapped, spared the shame while it conveyed the instruction, and they probably found a gratification in the in-

genuity

genuity of their own ſolution which contributed to reconcile them to the ſharpneſs of the reproof.

The moſt unjuſt and prejudiced of the Jews were, by this wiſe management, frequently drawn in to give an unconſcious teſtimony againſt themſelves; this was eſpecially the caſe in the inſtance of the houſeholder and his ſervants. Had the truth they were led to deduce from this parable, been preſented in the offenſive form of a direct charge, it would have fired them with inexpreſſible indignation.

Chriſtians who abound in zeal, but are defective in knowledge and prudence, would do well to remember that *diſcretion* made a remarkable, though not diſproprtionate part, of the Redeemer's character; he never invited attack by imprudence, or provoked hoſtility by intemperate raſhneſs. When argument was not liſtened to, when perſuaſion was of no avail, when even all his miracles of mercy were miſrepreſented, and his divine beneficence thrown away, ſo that all farther

farther attempts to do good were unavailing, *he withdrew to another place ;* there, indeed, to experience the ſame malignity, there to exerciſe the ſame compaſſion.

The divine Author of our religion gave alſo the example of teaching, not only by parable, but by ſimple propoſitions, detached truths, pointed interrogations, poſitive injunctions, and independent prohibitions, rather than by elaborate and continuous diſſertation. He inſtructed, not only by conſecutive arguments, but by invitations, and diſſuaſives adapted to the feelings, and intelligible to the apprehenſions of his audience. He drew their attention by popular alluſions, delighted it by vivid repreſentations, and fixed it by reference to actual events. He alluded to the Galileans, cruſhed by the falling tower, which they remembered — to local ſcenery — the vines of Gethſemane, which they beheld, while he was deſcanting reſpectively upon repentance, and upon himſelf, as the " true vine." By theſe ſimple, but powerful and ſuitable methods, he

brought their daily habits, and every-day ideas, to run in the ſame channel with their principles and their duties, and made every object with which they were ſurrounded contribute its contingent to their inſtruction.

The lower ranks, who moſt earneſtly ſought acceſs to his perſon, could form a tolerably exact judgment on the things he taught, by the aptneſs of his alluſions to what they ſaw, and felt, and heard. The humble ſituation he aſſumed, alſo prevented their being intimidated by power, or influenced by authority. It at once made their attendance a voluntary act, and their aſſent an unbiaſſed conviction. The queſtions propoſed with a ſimple deſire of inſtruction, were anſwered with condeſcending kindneſs; thoſe dictated by curioſity or craft, were repelled with wiſdom, or anſwered, not by gratifying importunity, but by grafting on the reply ſome higher inſtruction than the enquirer had either propoſed or deſired. Where a direct anſwer would, by exciting prejudice, have impeded uſefulneſs, he

evaded

evaded the particular queſtion by enforcing from it ſome general truth. On the application of the man whoſe brother had refuſed to divide the inheritance with him — in declining to interfere judicially, he gave a great moral lecture of univerſal uſe againſt avarice, while he prudently avoided the ſubject of the particular litigation.

His anſwer to the entangling queſtion, "And who is my neighbour?" ſuggeſted the inſtructive illuſtration of the duty to a neighbour, in that brief, but highly finiſhed apologue of the good Samaritan. The Jews, who would never have owned that a Samaritan was their neighbour, were, by this pious management, drawn in to acknowledge, that every man, without regard to country, who was even of a hoſtile country, if he needed their aſſiſtance, was their neighbour. In this ſlight outline, three characters are ſketched with ſo much ſpirit and diſtinctneſs, that, as Mr. Boyle ſays of Scripture truths in general, they reſemble thoſe portraits, whoſe

eyes,

eyes, every one who enters the room, fancies are fixed on him.

Falſe zeal, which he generally found aſſociated with pride and hypocriſy, was almoſt the only vice which extorted from him unmitigated ſeverity: if he ſometimes corrected preſumption and repelled malicious inquiſitiveneſs, he uniformly encouraged diſtreſs to approach, and penitence to addreſs him. The moſt indirect of his inſtructions inculcated or encouraged goodneſs. The moſt ſimple of his reaſonings were irrefragable without the formality of ſyllogiſm; and his brief, but powerful perſuaſions, went ſtraight to the heart, which the moſt elaborate diſcuſſions might have left unmoved. Every hearer, however illiterate, would at once ſeize his meaning, except thoſe who found themſelves intereſted in not underſtanding it; every ſpectator, "if they believed not him, would believe his works," if pride had not blinded their eyes, if prejudice had not barred up their hearts.

Thus,

Thus, if in the Goſpels, the great doctrines of religion are not always conveyed in a didactic form, or linked with logical arrangement, ſome important truth meets us at every turn, is held out in ſome brief ſentence; ſome hint is dropped that may awaken, recall, quicken, or revive perpetual attention. The ſame ſpirit pervades every part; we are reminded without being fatigued; and, whatever is the point to be preſſed, ſome informing, alarming, or conſoling doctrine is extracted from it, or grows out of it.

The Scriptures, however, are ſo far from ſetting aſide the uſe of reaſon, that all their precepts are addreſſed to it. If they are delivered in a popular manner, and often in independent maxims, our reaſon, by combining them, methodizes the detached paſſages into a perfect ſyſtem; ſo that by a combination, which it is in the power of every intelligent reader to make, a complete rule of practice is collected. The ſcattered precepts are embodied in examples, illuſtrated

trated by figures, and exemplified by parables. Thefe always fuppofe the mind of the hearer to be poffeffed of a certain degree of common knowledge, without which the propofed inftruction would be unintelligible. For, if the Gofpel does not addrefs its difciples as if they were philofophers or mathematicians, it always fuppofes them to poffefs plain fenfe and ordinary information; to have acquaintance with human, if not with elevated life. The allufions and imagery with which it abounds would have been fuperfluous, if the hearers had not been previoufly acquainted with the objects and circumftances to which the image is referred, from which the parallel is drawn, to which the allufion is made.

Our heavenly Father, in his offers of illumination, does not expect we fhould open our mental eyes to this fuperinduced light, without opening our underftandings to natural and rational information, but expects that we fhould apply the faculties beftowed, to the objects propofed to them. We put ourfelves,

ourſelves, therefore, in the faireſt way of obtaining his aſſiſtance, when we moſt diligently uſe all the means and materials he has given us; comparing together his works and his word; not ſetting up our underſtanding againſt his revelation, but, with deep humility, applying the one to enable us to comprehend the other; not extinguiſhing our faculties, but our pride; not laying our underſtanding aſleep, but caſting it at the foot of the croſs. We have dwelt on this point the more, from having obſerved, that ſome religious perſons are apt to ſpeak with contempt of great natural endowments as if they were not the gift of God, but of ſome inferior power: the prudently pious, on the other hand, while they uſe them to the end for which they were conferred, keep them in due ſubordination, and reſtrict them to their proper office. Abilities are the gift of God, and next to his grace, though with an immenſe interval, his beſt gift; but are never ſo truly eſtimable as when they are dedicated to promote his glory.

Our

Our heavenly Inſtructor, ſtill more to accommodate his parables to the capacities of his audience, adopted the broad line of inſtruction conveyed under a few ſtrong features of general parallel, a few leading points of obvious coincidence, without attending to petty exactneſſes, or ſtooping to trivial niceties of correſpondence. We are not, therefore, to hunt after minute reſemblances, nor to cavil at ſlight diſcrepancies. We ſhould rather imitate his example, by confining our illuſtration to the more important circumſtances of likeneſs, inſtead of raiſing ſuch as are inſignificant into undue diſtinction. This critical elaboration, this amplifying mode, which ramifies a general idea into all the minutiæ of parallel, would only ſerve to divert the attention, and ſplit it into ſo many diviſions, that the main object would be loſt ſight of.

The author once heard a ſermon which had for its text, "Ye are the ſalt of the earth." The preacher, a really good man, but wanting this diſcretion, not contented with

with a ſimple application of the figure, inſtead of a general alluſion to the powerfully penetrating and correcting nature of this mineral, inſtead of obſerving that ſalt was uſed in all the ancient ſacrifices, indulged himſelf in a wide range, chemical and culinary, of all the properties of ſalt, devoting a ſeparate head to each quality. A long diſcuſſion on its antiſeptic properties, its ſolution and neutralization, led to rather a luxurious exhibition of the reliſhes it communicates to various viands. On the whole, the diſcourſe ſeemed better adapted for an audience compoſed of the authors of the Pharmacopœia, or a ſociety of cooks, than for a plain untechnical congregation.

But to return. — Who can reflect without admiration on the engaging variety with which the great Teacher labours to impreſs every important truth? Whenever different aſpects of the ſame doctrine were likely ſtill more forcibly to ſeize the attention, ſtill more deeply to touch the heart, ſtill more powerfully to awaken the conſcience, he

he does not content himſelf with a ſingle allegory. In his awful exhibition of the ineſtimable value of an immortal ſoul, he does not coolly deſcribe the repentance of a ſingle ſinner as viewed with complacency by the higheſt order of created intelligences, but as adding " joy" to bliſs already perfected in immortality. He does not limit his inſtruction to one metaphorical illuſtration of the delight of the heavenly hoſts, but extends it to three, finiſhing the climax by that moſt endearing and touching of all moral and allegorical pictures, the reſtoration of the prodigal to his father's love.

But this triple uſe of the ſame ſpecies of allegory — each inſtance riſing above the other, in beauty and in force, each adding freſh weight to one momentous point — he moſt emphatically employs in the laſt diſcourſe previous to his final ſuffering; we mean in his ſublime illuſtration of the ſolemnities of the laſt day, in three ſucceſſive parables all tending to impreſs the ſame awful truth.

As

As he well knew every acceſſible point of the human heart, ſo there was none which he did not touch. But the grand circumſtance which carried his inſtructions ſo directly home to the hearts and conſciences of men, was, that he not only taught, but "did all things well." His doctrines were ſo digeſted into his life, his inſtructions ſo melted into his practice, that it rendered goodneſs viſible as well as perfect; and theſe analogies and reſemblances, were not only admirably, but uniformly correſpondent. He did not content himſelf like thoſe heathen philoſophers, to whoſe affable conduct in ſociety, that of the bleſſed Redeemer has lately been ſo impiouſly compared, (though their motives differed, as much as the deſire of converting ſinners differs from delighting in them,) with exhibiting ſyſtems without morals, and a rule without a pattern, but the purity and perfection of his divine character gave light to knowledge, and life to document.

CHAP. VI.

On the Parable of the Talents.

OUR Redeemer's parables had been ſometimes indicative of exiſting circumſtances; ſometimes predictive of events which related to futurity. After having, in his preceding allegories, by practical leſſons, encouraged the prepared, and exhorted the unprepared to look for the kingdom of God, he cloſed his parabolical * inſtructions by an awful exhibition of their fitneſs or unfitneſs for that everlaſting kingdom; in which he unfolds what their condition will be, when all myſtery, all inſtruction, all preparation, ſhall be at an end; when every act of every being ſhall be laid as bare before the eyes of the whole aſſembled world, as it was ſeen in its commiſſion by HIS, from whom nothing is hid. The laſt of theſe three prophetic ſcenes is indeed not ſo much a parable as a

* See Matthew xxv.

picture; not so much an allegory as a literal representation: the solemn reality rises above all figure, and could never have been so forcibly conveyed as by this plain, yet most sublime, delineation.

The conclusion immediately to be drawn from the second of these parables, the parable of the Talents, is, that we have nothing that is properly our own, nothing that is underived from God. Every talent is a deposit placed in our hands, not for our exclusive benefit, but for the good of others. Whatever we possess which may either be improved to God's glory, or perverted to his dishonour, comes within the description of a talent. To use any of our possessions, therefore, as if we had an independent right to the disposal of them, is to usurp the prerogative of the Giver. Many, it is to be feared, will wait till that great disclosing-day which will throw a blaze of light on all motives, as well as all actions, before they will be convinced of the fallacy of that popular maxim, that a man may do what he will with his own. He has indeed a full right to his proprietorship with

respect to other men, but, with respect to God, he will find he had no exclusive property. Whatever portion of his possessions conscience ought to have turned over from vanity to charity, from sensuality to piety, he may find, too late, was not his own, but his who gave it him for other purposes.

God proportions his requisitions to his gifts. The one is regulated by the measure of the other. As duties and obligations are peculiar and personal, we are not to trench on the sphere of others. It is of our own talent, we must render our own account. A capacity, however, to know our duty, and to love and serve God, as they are indiscriminately bestowed, so the inquiry into the use made of them will be universal, while the reward or punishment will be individually assigned.

Deficiency and excess are the Scylla and Charybdis between which we seldom steer safely. If our talents are splendid, we are subject to err on the side of display; if mean, totally to suppress their exercise, apologizing for our indolence by our insignificance; but mediocrity

mediocrity of talents is as insufficient an excuse for sloth, as superior genius is for vanity. The true way would be, to exercise the brightest faculties with humility, and the most inconsiderable with fidelity. The faithful and highly gifted servants in the parable, it is apparent, were so far from being lifted into pride, or seduced into negligence, by the greater importance of the trust committed to them, that they considered the largeness of their agency as an augmentation of their responsibility. *They* did the will of their lord without conditioning or debating. Their slothful associate, instead of doing it, contented himself with arguing about it. He who disputed much, had done nothing: he should have known, that Christianity is not a matter of debate, but of obedience.

There is no one doctrine of Holy Scripture either insignificant or merely theoretical. That which this parable teaches, is highly and specifically practical. The instruction to be deduced from it, is as extensive as the gifts of God to his creatures, as the obligations of

of man to his benefactor. It is more especially practical, as it designates this world to be a scene of business, action, exertion, diligence. It inculcates the high and complicated duty, of laying out ourselves for the glory of our Maker, and the exercise of an implicit obedience to his will. God has not given us the command to work, without furnishing us with instruments with which to labour, and suitable materials to work upon. Our talents, such as *riches*, *power*, *influence*, *wisdom*, *learning*, *time*, are those instruments. The wants, helplessness, and ignorance of mankind, are the objects to which these instruments are to be applied. These talents are bestowed in various proportions, as to their value, as well as in different degrees, as to the quantity and number. He who is favoured with more abundant endowments, should mix with his gratitude for the gift, an abiding sense of his own greater accountableness. He who is slenderly furnished, should never plead that the inferiority of his trust is an

excuse

excuſe for his negligence. The conviction that the Great Maſter will not exact beyond the proportion of his gift, though an encouragement to thoſe whom his providence has placed in a narrow ſphere of uſefulneſs, is no diſcharge from their diligence. Is it reaſonable, that he who has leſs to do, ſhould therefore do nothing? When little is expected from us, not to do that little enhances the crime; and it aggravates the ingratitude, when we convert our maſter's more moderate demands into a pretence for abſolute ſupineneſs.

He who is not called upon to relieve the neceſſities, or to enlighten the ignorance of others, has ſtill a weighty work upon his hands: he has the care of his own ſoul. If he is deficient in learning, and natural abilities—if he has little credit, and leſs fortune, he probably has time; he certainly has the means of religious improvement: ſo that, in this land of light and knowledge, eſpecially now that univerſal inſtruction is happily become a national care, there is hardly ſuch

a thing as innocent ignorance. Even of the lowest, of the least, a strict account will be required. To plead ignorance where they might have been taught, indolence because they had little to do, and negligence, because not much was expected, is only treasuring up innumerable reasons for aggravating their condemnation.

It is remarkable that of the several characters exhibited in the parable, the least endowed was the only one punished, his neglect being every way inexcusable. A lasting and awful lesson, that no inferiority can claim exemption from the general law of duty. If the right employment of the gift is an encouragement to the poorly endowed, as being easily exercised and amply rewarded; its abuse is an awakening call to every one. For, is it not fairly deducible from this instance, that if of those whose scale in society is low, whose intellectual powers are mean, or whose fortunes are narrow; if even of such, a strict account

will

will be required, if even in theſe, mere deficiency was ſo harſhly reprobated, mere nullity was ſo ſeverely puniſhed,—a ſentence of moſt tremendous import muſt await thoſe who employ rank and opulence to ſelfiſh and corrupt ends, or genius to pernicious purpoſes; the one debaſing their own minds by ſenſuality, or corrupting others by examples of vice and prodigality; the other, devoting abilities ſo great, with profligacy ſo notorious, as to appear little leſs than "archangel ruined," and drawing inferior ſpirits into the deſtruction in which they have plunged themſelves.

But again:—if theſe ſeveral talents, individually conferred, when employed to wrong purpoſes, or not employed at all, will be rigorouſly puniſhed; what ſentence have they to expect, in whom is centered the ſplendid confluence of God's gifts? What will be the eternal anathema pronounced on thoſe who poſſeſſed aggregately talents, with every one of which, ſingly enjoyed, they might have rendered the

world about them better and happier? To reflect by whom they were beſtowed, to what end deſigned, how they have been uſed, and what a reckoning awaits them, forms a combination of reflections too awful to be dwelt upon. From the anticipation of ſuch complicated woe we turn with terror. The bare idea of a puniſhment which ſhall always torment, and never deſtroy, is inſupportable. Yet how many believe this without being influenced by the belief! How many, by an unaccountable deluſion, refuſe to conform their lives to the injunctions of the Goſpel, while they put their vices under the protection of its promiſes.

The parable informs us, that it was "after a long time," that the Lord required the account; ſo long, that the wicked think it will never come, and even the good are apt to perſuade themſelves that it will not come ſoon. Let not thoſe, however, who are ſitting at eaſe in their poſſeſſions, whether of nature or of fortune, to ſpeak after the manner of men, fancy that the reckon-

ing which is delayed is forgotten. The more protracted the account, the larger will be the ſum total, and, of courſe, the more ſevere the requiſition. All delay, indeed, is an act of mercy; but mercy neglected, or abuſed, will enhance puniſhment in proportion as it aggravates guilt.

It is obvious that the ſervants in the parable had been in the habit of attending to their mercies. They ſeem never to have been unmindful of the exact value of what had been committed to them, "Lord, thou deliveredſt unto me five talents." If we do not frequently enumerate the mercies of God to us, we ſhall be in danger of loſing ſight of the giver, while we are revelling in the gift; of neglecting the application, and forgetting the reſponſibility. We ſhould recollect, that his very employment of us is a high mark of favour; the uſe he condeſcends to make of us, augments our debt, and whenever he puts it in our way to ſerve him, he lays on us a freſh obliga-

 tion,

tion, and confers on us an honourable diſtinction.

Though he that has moſt, and does moſt, has but "a few things," yet his remuneration ſhall be immenſe. It is his fidelity, and not his ſucceſs; his zeal in improving occaſions, and not the number or greatneſs of the occaſions, that will be rewarded. There will always be an infinite diſproportion between the work he has done, and the bleſſing attending it.

The expoſtulation of the unprofitable ſervant preſents an awful leſſon againſt diſtruſt in God, and fallacious views of his infinitely perfect character. The very motive this falſe reaſoner produces in his own vindication, is the ſtrongeſt argument againſt him. If he "knew" that his lord was ſuch a rigorous exactor, that was the very reaſon, why he ſhould not have given in ſuch a negative account. "I knew thou waſt a hard maſter." Could a weightier argument have been advanced for a directly different conduct? Common prudence might

might have taught him that, with ſuch a maſter, his only ſecurity was aſſiduous induſtry. The want of love of God was at the root of this, as it is of all ſin.

How many liſten to the ſentence of this unworthy ſervant! How many allow the equity of his excluſion, and yet how few, comparatively, aſk, with the agitated Apoſtles; "Lord, is it I?" This ſimple queſtion, honeſtly put, and practically followed up, would render all comment vain, all exhortation ſuperfluous. This ſelf-application is the great end of the parable, the great end of Scripture, the great end of preaching, and the only end of hearing.

But do not too many of us, like him we are ſo ready to condemn, conceal our ſelf-love under the aſſumption of modeſty, and indulge our ſloth under the humble pretence that we have no talent to exerciſe? But let us be aſſured it is the deadneſs of our ſpiritual affections, and not our mean opinion of ourſelves, that is the real cauſe. The ſervice of God is irkſome, becauſe his commands interfere with our ſelf-indulgence.

Let

Let the lowly Chriſtian, poſſeſſed of but his ſingle talent, cheer his fainting heart by that beautifully condeſcending plea, with which the compaſſionate Saviour vindicated the modeſt penitent, who had no other way of demonſtrating her affection but by pouring perfumes on his feet — SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD. A tenderneſs of encouragement, which, if we conſider by whom it was uttered, and to whom addreſſed, muſt convey conſolation to the heart of the moſt poorly endowed and ſelf-abaſing Chriſtian.

From natural feeling, from inward conſciouſneſs, from the notices of reaſon, the traces of hereditary opinion, and the analogy of things, independently of Revelation, we cannnot avoid the belief that we are accountable beings. Our notions of right and wrong, of equity and judgment, our inſuppreſſible forebodings, our fearful anticipations, the ſuggeſtions of natural conſcience, all unite their ſeveral forces to faſten on the mind the belief that we ſhall be called to a definite account. Our intelligent nature, our rational powers, our voluntary agency,

make

make us ſuitable ſubjects of God's moral government. His wiſdom, power, omniſcience, rectitude, and juſtice, render him ſupremely fit to be our final judge, and the diſpenſer of our eternal awards. But God, in his infinite goodneſs, has not, in this moſt important point, left us to the bare light of unaſſiſted nature: he has not left us to be toſſed about without rudder, or compaſs, on the boundleſs ocean of haraſſing conjecture. He has not abandoned us to the alternation of vain fears and unfounded hopes; to the ſickly ſuggeſtions of a troubled fancy, the cruel uncertainties of doubt, and the cheerleſs darkneſs of ignorance. The expectation of a day of retribution is not the gloomy reverie of the ſuperſtitious, nor the wild viſion of the enthuſiaſtic. *He who cannot lie* has ſolemnly aſſured us, that he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that Man whom He has ſent, Chriſt Jeſus.

The coming of this great day which nature ſuſpected, and reaſon allowed, Scripture confirms.

confirms. It will at length arrive. The ſcrutiny ſo graphically exhibited by our Lord, will be realized in all its pomp of terrors. The ſea ſhall give up its dead, and death and hell ſhall deliver up the dead which are in them, and every man ſhall be judged according to his works. And the dead, ſmall and great, ſhall ſtand before God, and the judgment ſhall be ſet, and the books opened, and the dead ſhall be judged out of thoſe things which are written in the books, according to their works.

This univerſal examination into the human character, this critical diſſection of the heart of man, from the firſt created being to him who ſhall be caught up alive in the air at Chriſt's ſecond coming, ſhall infallibly take place. Bleſſed be Almighty forbearance, it is ſtill in the power of every exiſting child of Adam to lighten to himſelf his apprehenſions of that day. He may do more; he may convert terror into tranſport, by acting now as if he really believed it would one day come; by acting as he ſhall

then wiſh he had acted. If "the terrors of the Lord perſuade men," what effect ſhould his mercy produce; that mercy which has given the univerſal warning to the whole human race in three conſentaneous Parables, exhibited with a ſpirit of truth more reſembling hiſtoric narrative, than prophetic anticipation! There is not one living being who now reads this page from whom that day is diſtant; to ſome it muſt be very near; to none perhaps nearer, than to her who now tremblingly preſumes to raiſe the warning voice;—to her, to all, it is tremendouſly awful. Let none of us, then, content ourſelves with a barren admiration of its ſolemnities, as if it were an affecting ſcene of a tragedy, invented to move the paſſions without rectifying them; to inſpire terror, without quickening repentance. Let us not be ſtruck by it as with a wonderful fact in hiſtory, which involves the intereſt of ſome one country with which we have no particular concern; or of ſome remote century diſconnected with that in which our lot is

caſt.

caſt. It is the perſonal, the individual, the everlaſting concern of every rational being through all the rolls of time, till time ſhall be no more. It is the final, unalterable deciſion on the fate of every intelligent, and, therefore, every accountable creature, to whom God has revealed his will, to whom he has ſent his Son, to whom he has offered the aid of his Spirit.

No wonder that the univerſal adminiſtration of final juſtice ſhall be manifeſted in the moſt awful pomp and ſplendor, when the eternal Son of the eternal Father, in the full brightneſs of his glory, ſhall be the judge; when the whole aſſembled univerſe ſhall be the ſubjects of judgment; when not only the deeds of every life, but the thoughts of every heart ſhall be brought to light; when, if *we* produce our works, the recording book will produce our motives; when every ſaint who acted as ſeeing Him who is inviſible, ſhall not only ſee but ſhare the glory in which he truſted; when the hypocrite ſhall behold him whom he believed

believed without trufting, and mocked without deceiving; when the profligate fhall witnefs the reality of what he feared, and the infidel fhall feel the certainty of what he denied.

CHAP. VII.

On Influence, considered as a Talent.

IT is at best but a selfish sort of satisfaction, though the poet calls it a delightful one, *to see others tossed about in a storm, while we are sitting in security, rejoicing, not because they are in danger, but because we are safe.* Christianity instructs us to improve on the sentiment. It teaches us to extract not only comfort and gratification from the comparison of our happier lot with that of the less favoured; but in making the comparison, it reminds us to make it with reference to God, by emphatically asking, "Who is it that maketh us to differ?"

But if we look around, not only on the external but on the moral and mental distinctions among mankind, and consider the ignorance, the miseries, and the vices of others, as a ground for our more abundant gratitude;

gratitude; what ſort of feeling will be excited in certain perſons by a ſight and ſenſe of thoſe miſeries, thoſe vices, and that ignorance, of which their own influence, or example, or neglect has been the cauſe? If we ſee any unhappy whom we might have relieved, any ignorant whom we ought to have inſtructed, any corrupt whoſe corruptions we never endeavoured to reform, but whom, perhaps, we have contributed to make what they are; in either of theſe caſes, it is difficult to conceive any ſtate of mind leſs ſuſceptible of comfort, any circumſtance more calculated to excite compunction. Theſe inſtances may help men to a pretty juſt criterion by which to judge of their own character, ſince it is certain *they* never felt any true gratitude for their own mercies, who can look with indifference on either the temporal or ſpiritual diſtreſſes of others. And if no one ever truly mourned for his own ſins who can be inſenſible to the ſins of thoſe around him, ſo no one can be earneſt to promote his own ſalvation, who neglects any

any fair opening of contributing to the ſalvation of others.

What an appalling reflection it is, that at the tremendous bar, a being already overwhelmed with the weight of his own offences, may have to ſuſtain the addition of the amazing and unexpected load of all thoſe, of which he has been the cauſe in others! The very loweſt of the claims which religion has upon us, is, not to injure her, not to diſhonour her, not to obſtruct her good effect on others. Yet between this and her higher demands, there is frequently no intermediate ſtate. There are few who are negatively religious.

Influence is a talent not only of undefineable but of univerſal extent. Who is there ſo inſignificant as not to have his own circle, greater or ſmaller, made better or worſe, by his ſociety, his conduct, his counſels? That preſumptuous but common conſolation of a dying bed, *I have done no harm to any one*, is always the fallacious refuge of ſuch

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as have done little or no good. Man is no ſuch neutral being.

It is not the deſign of the preſent conſiderations to inſiſt ſo much on the more ſtriking and conſpicuous inſtances of miſemployed influence, (for the ordinary ſtate of life does not inceſſantly call them into action,) as on thoſe overlooked, though not unimportant demands for its exertion, which occur in the every-day tranſactions of mankind, more eſpecially among the opulent and the powerful.

Rank and fortune confer an influence the moſt commanding. All objects attract the more notice from being placed on an eminence, and do not excite the leſs attention, becauſe they may deſerve leſs admiration. In anticipating the ſcrutiny that will hereafter be made into the manner in which the rich and great have employed their influence, that powerful engine put into their hands for the nobleſt purpoſes, may we not venture to wiſh they had ſome diſintereſted friend, leſs anxious to pleaſe than to ſerve them,

them, who would honeftly, as occafion might offer, interrogate them in a manner fomething like the following :—

" Allow me, as a friend to your immortal interefts, to afk you a few plain queftions. Has your power been uniformly employed in difcouraging injuftice, in promoting particular as well as general good ; in countenancing religious as well as charitable inftitutions ; in protecting the pious, as well as in affifting the indigent ? Has your influence been confcientioufly exerted in vindicating injured merit ; has it been employed in defending infulted worth againft the infolence of the unfeeling, the fcorn of the unworthy, the neglect of the unthinking ? Has it been exercifed in patronizing modeft genius, which would, without your foftering hand, have funk in obfcurity ?

" Have you, in the recommendations which have been required of you, had an eye to the fuitablenefs of the candidate for the place, rather than to a provifion for an unworthy applicant, to the injury of the

office ?

office? And have you honeſtly preferred the imperative claims of the inſtitution to the ſolicitations, or even to the wants, of the individual? Have you never loaded a public, or injured a private, eſtabliſhment, by appointing an unfit agent, becauſe he was a burden on your own hands, or a charge on your own purſe? Have you never promoted a ſervant who had "waſted your goods," and with whom you parted for that very reaſon, to the ſuperintendance of a charity, or to the management of an office, where you knew he would have a wider ſphere, and a more uncontrouled power, of purloining public property, or waſting private bounty, than in that from which your prudence had diſcharged him?

To riſe a ſtep higher:—"Have you never, if intruſted with a patronage over that peculiarly ſacred office, "which any one may well tremble to give or to receive," been governed by a ſpirit of nepotiſm in the diſpoſal of it, which you perhaps ſeverely cenſure under a certain other eſtabliſhment

moſt obviouſly corrupt? Have you never been engaged in promoting men, who, from their deſtitution of principle, are a diſhonour to the profeſſion in which you have been raiſing them, or, by the want of abilities, are diſqualified for it? Have you never connived at the preferment of the weak or the wicked, to the excluſion of others whoſe virtues and talents eminently fitted them for the ſituation? Or, have you, rather, ſtrenuouſly laboured to fix the meritorious in the place they were ſo qualified to fill, while you ſupplied the wants of the undeſerving or incompetent relative out of your own purſe? And have you habitually made a conſcience of recommending adequate perſons in preference to the unworthy and the unfit, though the latter belonged to your own little ſenate, or ſwelled your own large train?

"Have you habitually borne in mind that important, but diſregarded, maxim, that what you do by another is done by yourſelf, and not only carefully avoided oppreſſion in your

your own perſon, but, riſing ſuperior to that ſelfiſh indolence, the bane, the grave of every nobler quality; have you been careful that your agents do not exerciſe a tyranny which you yourſelf abhor, but which may be carried on under your name? Your ignorance of ſuch injuſtice will be of little avail, if, through ſupineneſs, you have ſanctioned abuſes which vigilance might have prevented, or exertion puniſhed.

"Have you unkindly denied acceſs to your preſence to the diffident ſolicitor, who has no other channel to preferment but your favour; and if not able to ſerve him, have you ſoftened your refuſal by feelingly participating in his diſappointment, inſtead of aggravating it by refuſing to ſee and ſoothe him, when you could do no more? Have you conſidered that, to liſten to weariſome applications and pertinacious claims, is among the drawbacks of comfort neceſſarily appended to your ſtation? To examine into interfering pretenſions, while it is a duty you owe to the applicant, is a ſalutary exerciſe

of patience to yourſelf; it is alſo the only certain means you poſſeſs of diſtinguiſhing the meritorious from the importunate.

We dwell on this part of the ſubject the more earneſtly, becauſe it is to be feared that even the tender-hearted and the benevolent, from the facility of a yielding temper, from wearineſs of importunity, from a wiſh to ſpare their own feelings, as well as from a too natural deſire to get rid of trouble, are frequently induced to confer and to refuſe favours, not only againſt their principles and their judgment, but againſt their will. Yet as no virtue is ever poſſeſſed in perfection by him who is deſtitute of its oppoſite,—Have you been equally careful, never, for the ſake of popularity or the love of eaſe, to awaken falſe hopes, and keep alive falſe expectations in your retainers, though you knew you had no proſpect of ever making them good?—thus committing your own honour for the ſake of ſwelling the catalogue of your dependents; and, by inſincerity and indeciſion, feeding them with

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delufive promifes, when a firm negative, by extinguifhing hope, might have put them on a more fuccefsful purfuit.

Some ftriking inftances of delicate liberality, recorded of a late lamented ftatefman, have fhown, that it is not too much to expect from human nature, that a man fhould exert his influence for the benefit of another, even though it were to his own difadvantage, and that he fhould be not only willing, but defirous, not to procure for himfelf the gratitude of the obliged perfon, nor to obtain his admiration; but would be contented, that, while he himfelf afforded all the benefit, an intervening agent fhould have all the credit. This difintereftednefs is among the nicer criteria of a Chriftian fpirit.

While we can with truth affign the moft liberal praife to that fpirit of charity which pre-eminently diftinguifhes the prefent period, we are compelled to lament that juftice is not held in equal eftimation by fome of thofe who give the law to manners. This confiderably diminifhes their influence,

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becaufe it is the quality which, of all others, they moft feverely require in their dependants, as being that which is moft immediately connected with their own intereft. And how far from equitable is it, to blame and punifh the ftatutable offence in petty men, whofe breach of integrity is unhappily facilitated by continual opportunity, or induced by the preffure of want, while the rigorous exacter of juftice is as defective in the practice, as he is ftrict in the requifition?

The fpecies of injuftice alluded to, confifts much in that laxity of principle which admits of a fcale of expence difproportioned to the fortune: this creates the inevitable neceffity of remaining in heavy arrears to thofe who can ill afford to give long credit: in return, it induces in the creditor the habit, and almoft the neceffity, of enhancing the price of his commodity. The evil would be little, if the encroachment were only felt by thofe whofe tardy payment renders exorbitance almoft pardonable: but others,

who

who practice the moſt exact juſtice, are involved in the penalty, without partaking in the offence; and the correct are taxed for the improbity of the dilatory. This dilapidating habit leads to an indolence in inſpecting accounts; and the increaſing unwillingneſs to examine into debts, increaſes the inability to diſcharge them; for debts, like ſins, become more burdenſome in proportion as people neglect to enquire into them.

And here, if we might be allowed a remark ſomewhat foreign to our immediate ſubject, it may be obſerved, that the low conception of juſtice of which we complain has infected not only morals, but religion; or rather, what began in our principle towards God, extends to our practice towards man. It is the attribute of which we make the leaſt ſcruple to rob the Almighty; for it is a faſhionable, though covert mode, of arraigning his juſtice, when we affect to exalt his character by repreſenting him as too merciful to puniſh. Juſtice is not only

eminently conſpicuous in her own central ſtation, but gives life and light to other attributes. By cutting off ſuperfluous expences, temperance and ſobriety grow out of juſtice; and, what is ſubtracted from luxury, is carried over, without additional expence, to the account of beneficence.

The Holy Scriptures lay down ſome preciſe and indiſpenſable rules for the practice of juſtice, while they leave great latitude, at leaſt as to the ſelection of an individual acts, to charity. Juſtice can be maintained only by this diſtinct demand and rigid acquieſcence, while charity would loſe the nature and quality of benevolence, if it were under any ſuch expreſs and definite rules. Charity may chuſe her object, but thoſe of juſtice are choſen for her. It was, doubtleſs, in mercy, that no abſolute rule or limitation is made reſpecting charity, that we might have the gratification of a voluntary delight in its exerciſe, for our nature is, in this reſpect, ſo kindly conſtituted, that, in minds

minds not peculiarly ill formed, the call to beneficence is the call to enjoyment.

But the influence of the great, “the observed of all obſervers,” deſcends into the ſocial walks of life. The pinnacle on which they ſtand, makes their moſt trival actions, and even words, objects of attention and imitation to thoſe beneath them. The conſciouſneſs of this ſhould be an additional motive for avoiding, in their ordinary converſation, not only what is corrupt, but whatever ſavours of levity and imprudence; the vanity of the little world is ready, not from miſchief, but ſelf-importance, to convert the thoughtleſs ſlips of the great into conſequence; their moſt frivolous remarks are quoted, merely that the quoter may ſeize the only occaſion he could ever find of ſhewing that he has been admitted to their company. This harmleſs little ſtratagem holds out a ſtrong motive for thoſe whoſe condition in life makes them ſubjects of obſervation, occaſionally to let fall ſomething that may be remembered, not merely becauſe

they ſaid it, but becauſe it was worth ſaying. This remark applies to ſuperiority of talents, to be conſidered in our next head, ſtill more than of rank.

As the great and noble are ſufficiently diſpoſed to look with reverted eye back to their anceſtral honours, it were to be wiſhed that they were all as ready, as we are happy to ſay ſome of them are, to caſt the ſame careful retroſpect to the ancient uſages of their illuſtrious houſes. There was a time when family-devotion was conſidered as a kind of natural appendage to high rank, when domeſtic worſhip was almoſt as inſeparably connected with the ariſtocracy, as the church with the ſtate. The chapel was as much a part of the ſplendid eſtabliſhment as the ſtate-room. When the form of piety was thus kept up, the reality was more likely to exiſt. Even the appearance was a homage to religion, the very cuſtom was an honourable recognition of Chriſtianity. But, in the way of influence, it muſt have been of high importance; the domeſtics would have

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their ſenſe of duty kept alive, and would with more alacrity ſerve thoſe who they ſaw ſerved God. It was a bond of political, as well as of moral union; it was the only occaſion on which "the rich and poor met together." There is ſomething of a coaleſcing property in ſocial worſhip. In acknowledging their common dependance on their common maſter, this equality of half an hour would be likely to promote ſubordination through the reſt of the day. Take it in an inferior point of view, it was a uſeful diſcipline, it was a family muſter-roll, a ſort of domeſtic parade, which regularly brought the privates before their commanding officers, and maintained order as well as detected abſence. It was alſo calculated to promote the intereſts of the ſuperiors, by periodically reminding their dependants of their duty to God, which neceſſarily involves every human obligation.

WE come now to ſpeak, though curſorily, of another depoſit of talent, not leſs ex-

tenſive in its immediate effects, and far more important in its conſequences; the influence of Genius and Learning. As the influence of well-directed talents is too obvious to require animadverſion, we ſhall confine our brief remarks to their contrary direction. If we could ſuppoſe the man whoſe talents had, by pernicious principles, been diverted from their right channel, to have, at the cloſe of life, that clear view of his own character, and the miſapplication of his mental powers, which will be preſented to him when he opens his eyes on eternity, we ſhould witneſs as complete a contraſt with his preſent feelings as any two oppoſite deſcriptions of character could exhibit.

Of all the various ſentences to be awarded at the dread tribunal, can imagination figure one more ſevere than will be pronounced againſt the polluted and polluting wit; the nobleſt faculties turned into arms againſt him who gave them, the eloquence which would ſcarcely have diſparaged the tongue of angels, converted to the rhetoric of hell?

The miſchief of a corrupt book is indefinite, both in extent and duration. When the perſonal example of the writer has done its worſt, and has only ruined his friends and neighbours, the operation of an unprincipled work may be but juſt beginning. It is a ſin, the commiſſion of which carries in it more of the character of its infernal inſpirer than any other. It is a crime not prompted by appetite, kindled by paſſion, or provoked by temptation; but a gratuitous, voluntary, cold-blooded enormity, the offspring of intellectual wickedneſs, the child of ſpiritual depravity; the deepeſt ſin without the ſlighteſt excuſe. Sins of ſurpriſe have infirmity to plead, but, in this frigid villainy, the badneſs of the motive keeps pace with the turpitude of the act. The *intention* is to offend God, the *project* is to ruin man; the *aim* is to poiſon the temporal peace, the *deſign* is to murder the everlaſting hope of all who come in contact with it.

But the excluſive application of talents to ſubjects perfectly unexceptionable, and right and valuable, as far as they go, is ſometimes an

an occafion in which we might mingle regret with admiration. We view with reverence the profound fcholar, a man, fo far from having loft any time in trifling, whofe very amufements are labours, and whofe relaxation is intenfity of thought, and fedulity of ftudy. By unremitting diligence, he has been daily adding frefh ftores to his ponderous mafs of erudition, or periodically prefenting new tomes to the literary world, in return for thofe he has rifled. But, put the cafe, that fuch a man has never fo much as conceived the thought of lending to religion his weight of character, or the influence of his reputation, by devoting fome little interval to a moral or religious fpeculation, or has never once entertained the idea of directing his treafures of learning, into any channel which leads to the country where he and his volumes together, the durable regifter of his life, are foon about to land,—Who can forbear, in the contemplation of fuch a poffible character, regretting that his too moderate ambition fhould be fatisfied with the applaufe of an age or

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an iſland, without once exerciſing his talents on ſome topic which might have included the concerns of his whole ſpecies, which might have embraced the intereſts of both worlds? Who can forbear lamenting, that he has riſen ſo high without reflecting that, in a moral ſenſe, " one ſtep higher would ſet him higheſt ;" that he ſhould have been contented with the idolatrous worſhip of ſome Pagan ſage as editor or annotator; and, for that humble meed, to relinquiſh the duty of glorifying his Maker, by inſtructing his fellow-creatures; as if that were a leſs ſplendid object, an inferior concern to be turned over to inferior abilities, and to which inferior abilities were adequate.

If the awful apprehenſion of a future account could, at the cloſe of life, lead even the illuſtrious Grotius, who had with equal ability cultivated both ſecular and ſacred ſtudies, to wiſh that he could change characters with a poor pious peaſant, who uſed to ſpend moſt of his time in reading the Bible at his gate, what may finally be the wiſh of thoſe who, having quitted a far leſs uſeful life with-

out any ſuch contrite confeſſion, are brought to *witneſs* at once the retribution aſſigned to the conſcientious uſe of one ſolitary talent, and to *feel* that awarded to their own vaſt but abuſed allotment? That awakening parable of the Divine Teacher which preſents ſo terrible a view of the "great gulf" which irrevocably ſeparated two other neighbours, whoſe reſpective lots in worldly circumſtances reſembled the diſtinctions of intellect in the preceding inſtance — that "gulf" which eternally divided the holy beggar from the opulent ſenſualiſt — is equally applicable to the preſent caſe. If any thing could deepen or widen a barrier already hopeleſsly impaſſable, might it not be the ſubſtitution of ill-applied abilities for miſemployed riches.*

An affecting thought involuntarily forces itſelf upon us, on the departure of diſtinguiſhed genius. All thoſe ſhining talents which had hitherto too excluſively filled our minds,

* Let no one apply this to the great ſtateſman of Holland.

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ſink at once in our eſtimation, becauſe we know they are now nothing to their poſſeſſor but as they were uſed, worſe than nothing if they were not uſed wiſely. In the court where he now ſtands for trial, neither the cogent argument nor the pointed wit can ſecure his accquital; happy if they appear not ſtrong evidences againſt it. The qualities of his heart, which perhaps, dazzled by thoſe of his head, we had not taken into the account — his errors having been loſt in his brightneſs — now come forward as the others recede. Our feelings are ſolely occupied with what may be now available to him to whom we have owed pleaſure or information. That fame which we lately thought ſo ſolid a good, ſeems now a painted cloud melting into air — that proud FOR EVER for which he wrote, ſeems dwindled to a point — that viſionary immortality which we had aſſigned as his meed, compared with the eternity on which he has entered, is become leſs than the ſhadow to the ſubſtance, leſs than the halo to the ſun.

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This idea ſtrikes the mind with peculiar force, upon the recent deceaſe of two writers of uncommon reach of thought, profound reſearch, and unbounded philological learning. Had theſe two eminent men been poſſeſſed of inferior minds, or a more dubious fame, their death would have ſounded the ſignal of ſilence, no leſs to the moraliſt than to the ſatyriſt, as to the groſs ſenſuality and corrupt principles of the one, the avowed atheiſm and profligate political doctrines of the other. As it is, we cannot but refer to them, though with feelings of pungent regret, and only under a ſtrong ſenſe of the atonement which ſuch examples owe to the world for the miſchief they do it, as a melancholy illuſtration of ſome of the preceding remarks. It is to be feared that the unmixed commendation of their talents and erudition, without the gentleſt cenſure of their principles and practices, with which ſome of our journals abounded on the loſs of theſe able but unhappy men, might tend to impreſs the ardent youthful ſtudent with an

an over-valuation of genius, unfanctified by Chriftian principles, of erudition undignified by virtuous conduct.

Far, very far, from my heart be the ungenerous thought of treating departed eminence with difrepect, but in analyfing ftriking characters is it not a duty to feparate "the precious from the vile," left unqualified commendation, where there is fuch large room for cenfure, fhould, while profufely embalming the dead, allure the ingenuous living to an imitation as unlimited, as the panegyric was undiftinguifhing?*

* To prevent any miftaken application of thefe remarks, it may be proper to avow that Profeffor Porfon and Mr. Horne Tooke are the perfons to whom they allude.

CHAP. VII.

On Time, conſidered as a Talent.

IF we already begin to feel what a large portion of life we have improvidently ſquandered — what days and nights have been ſuffered to waſte themſelves, if not criminally, yet inconſiderately; if not loaded with evil, yet deſtitute of good — how much time has been conſumed in worthleſs employments, frivolous amuſements, liſtleſs indolence, idle reading, and vain imaginations — if things already begin to appear wrong, which we once thought at leaſt harmleſs, though not perhaps uſeful — what appearance will they aſſume in that inevitable hour when all things will be ſeen in their true light, and appreciated according to their intrinſic value? We ſhall then feel in its full force how often we neglected what we knew to be our duty, ſhunned what we were aware

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was our intereſt, and declined what we yet believed would add to our happineſs; while, with perverted energy, we eagerly purſued what we had reaſon to think was contrary to our intereſt, duty, and happineſs. But excuſes ſatisfy us now, to which we ſhall not then give the hearing for a moment. The thin diſguiſe which the illuſion of the ſenſes now caſts over vanity, ſloth, and error, will then be as little efficient as conſolatory.

He who carefully governs his mind will conſcientiouſly regulate his time. To him who thus accurately diſtributes it, who appropriates the hour to its due employment, life will never ſeem tedious, yet counted by this moral arithmetic it will be really long. If we compute our time as critically as our other poſſeſſions; if we aſſign its proportions to its duties, though the diviſions will then be ſo fully occupied that they will never drag, yet the aggregate ſum will be found ſufficiently long for all the purpoſes to which life is deſtined.

It is not a little abſurd that they who moſt wiſh to aboliſh time would be the leaſt willing to abridge life. But is it not unreaſonable to endeavour to annihilate the parcels of which life is compoſed, and at the ſame time to have a dread of ſhrinking the ſtock? They who moſt pathetically lament the want of time are either perſons who plunge themſelves into unneceſſary concerns, or thoſe who manage them ill, or thoſe who do nothing. The firſt create the deficiency they deplore; the ſecond do not ſo much want time as arrangement; the laſt, like brute animals laden with gold, groan under the weight of a treaſure of which they make no uſe, and do not know the value.

They will never make a right uſe of time who turn it over to chance, who live without any definite ſcheme for its employment, or any fixed object for its end. Such deſultory beings will be carried away by every trifle that ſtrikes the ſenſes, or any whim that ſeizes the imagination. They who live without any ultimate point in view, can have

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no regular proceſs in the ſteps which lead to it.

But though in order to prevent confuſion, to animate torpor, and to tame irregularity, it is always a duty to form a plan, occaſions will ariſe when it may be a higher duty to break it. Both ourſelves and our plans muſt ever be kept ſubject to the will of a higher power. That is an ill-regulated mind which wears life away without any ſettled ſcheme of action; that is a little mind which makes itſelf a ſlave to any pre-conceived rule, when a more imperative duty may ariſe to demand its infraction. Providence may call us to ſome work during the day which we did not foreſee in the morning. Even a good deſign muſt be relinquiſhed to make way for a better, nor muſt we ſacrifice a uſeful to a favourite project, nor muſt we ſcruple to renounce our inclinations at the call of duty, or of neceſſity, for God loves a cheerful doer as well as a "cheerful giver."

In our uſe of time we frequently practiſe a deluſion which cheats us of no inconſider-

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able portion of its actual enjoyment. The *now* escapes us while we are settling future points not only of business, of ease, or of pleasure, but of benevolence, of generosity, of piety. These imaginary points to which we impatiently stretch forward in idea, we fix at successive but distant intervals, endeavouring by the rapid march of a hurrying imagination to annihilate the intervening spaces. One great evil of reckoning too absolutely on marked periods which may never arrive, is, that, by this absorption of the mind, we neglect present duties in the anticipation of events, not only remote but uncertain. Even if the anticipated period does arrive, it is not always applied to the purpose to which it was pledged; and the event which was to feel the full weight of our interference and commanding influence, when it has taken place, sinks into the undistinguished mass of time and circumstances. The point which we once thought, if it ever could be attained, would supply abundant matter, not only for present duty or pleasure, but

but for delightful retrofpection, lofes itfelf, as we mingle with it, in the common heap of forgotten things; and as we recede from it, merges in the dim obfcure of faded recollections. Having arrived at the era, inftead of feizing on that *prefent* fo impatiently defired while it was *future*, we again fend our imaginations out to frefh diftances in fearch of frefh deceits. While we are pufhing it on to objects ftill more remote, the large uncalculated fpaces of comfort and peace, or of languor and difcontent, which fill the chafm, and which we fcarcely think worth taking into the account, make up far the greater part of life.

All this would be only foolifh, and would hardly deferve a harfher name, if thefe large uncultivated waftes, thefe barren interftices, thefe neglected fubdivifions, had not all of them imperious demands of their own — if they were not to be as rigoroufly accounted for, as the vivid fpots and fhining profpects which promife fo much and produce fo little.

Let us not then compute time by particular periods or ſignal events. Let us not content ourſelves with putting our feſtal days only into the calendar, but remember that from the hour when reaſon begins to operate, to the hour in which it ſhall be extinguiſhed, every particle of time is valuable: that no day can be inſignificant, when every day is to be accounted for; that each one poſſeſſes weight and importance, becauſe of each the retribution is to be received. In the proſpect therefore of our coming time, let us not make great leaps from the expectation to the occurrence; but bearing in mind that ſmall concerns make up the larger ſhare of life, let us aim to execute well thoſe which lie more immediately before us. For the inſtant occaſion we have life and time in hand, for that which is proſpective, we may no longer be in poſſeſſion of either: and it is an argument of no ſmall cogency, that he who devotes time to its beſt purpoſes, ſecures eternity for its beſt enjoyments.

But

But we are guilty of the ſtrange inconſiſtency of being moſt prodigal of what we beſt love, and of throwing away what we moſt fear to loſe, that time of which life is made up. If God does not give us a ſhort time, we can contrive to make it ſhort by this wretched huſbandry. It is not ſo much indigence of time as prodigality in the waſte of it, that prevents life from anſwering all the ends for which it is given. Few things make us ſo independent of the world as the prudent diſpoſition of this precious article. It delivers people from hanging on the charity of others to emancipate them from the ſlavery of their own company. We ſhould not only be careful not to waſte our own time, but that others do not rob us of it. The diſtinction of crime between "ſtealing our purſe" and "ſtealing our good name" has been beautifully contraſted. That the purſe is "traſh" is a ſentiment echoed by many who yet ſet no ſmall value on the traſh ſo liberally condemned; while the waſter of his own, or the pilferer of another's time,

escapes a censure which he ought more heavily to incur. It is a felony for which no repentance can make restitution, the commodity being not only invaluable but irrecoverable.

Considerable evil, with respect to the economy of time, arises from an error which infects some minds of a superior cast — a notion that contempt of order and custom are indications of genius, that great minds cannot be tied to times, nor enslaved by seasons. They value themselves on being systematic only in their disdain of method, on being regular in nothing but irregularity; with them accident gives the law to action. They pride themselves not in dispatching business but postponing it, and this in order to shew with what ability they can retrieve time to which they are always in arrears. From this vanity of intimating that they can execute in hours what costs slower souls days or weeks, the most pressing business is deferred to some indefinite period, and duties thus postoned are not seldom omitted.

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The ſame confidence in his own powers which leads a young man of genius to believe he can catch knowledge by intuition, ſee every thing at a glance, and comprehend every thing in a moment, tempts him to put off that moment. But if ſuch wonders are really to be achieved without the old ingredients time and ſtudy, what might he not expect would be accompliſhed with their aſſiſtance? Thoſe who are now marvels would then be miracles! The too common conſequence of this impatience of application, is to affect to deſpiſe whatever knowledge requires time to attain, and to conſider whatever demands induſtry to acquire, as not worth acquiring.

Nor is this error monopolized by talents. We have known ſome, who, having no other evidence of genius to produce, never failed to be unpunctual. It is a wonder that the more intellectual, ſeeing their province thus invaded by dunces, do not become regular through mere contempt of their imitators, and abandon the abuſe of

time to thoſe who know not how to ſpend it wiſely.

Chriſtianity is a ſocial principle. He who has diſcovered the uſe of time, and conſequently the value of eternity, cannot but be ſolicitous for the ſpiritual good of his fellow-creatures. The one, indeed, is indicative of the other. But this good, like every other, is not without its dangers. We cannot eſſentially benefit people without aſſociating with them, without rendering ourſelves agreeable to them. But in ſo doing we ſhould ever recollect that we may ſeek to pleaſe till we forget to ſerve them, we may ſoften ſtrong truths to render them more palatable till we come gradually leſs to recommend *them*, than ourſelves. In the ſpirit of friendly accommodation we may inſenſibly lower the ſtandard of religion, with a view to make ourſelves more agreeable, and may deceive, in order to conciliate.

Or we may fall into another error. We may begin at the wrong end. We may cenſure

ſure the wrong practice without any reference to the principle, or we may ſuit our counſels, not to the wants, but to the taſte, of our friend. In our endeavours to promote the good of others, we ſhould be careful to find out the points in which they are moſt deficient. If their error be ignorance of Scripture, if worldlineſs, if prejudice, if a general diſinclination to ſerioufneſs, if a blind reſpect for religion, joined to an unacquaintedneſs with its doctrines; in each caſe, a very different mode of conduct will be requiſite. In each, in all, we ſhould, indeed, with the utmoſt fairneſs, lay open the whole ſcheme of Chriſtianity, neither concealing its difficulties, its humbling requiſitions, nor the ſelf-denials it impoſes. But, at the ſame time, if we ſuſpect any one truth to be particularly revolting to them, it will be more prudent to approach this truth gradually through others, from which they are leſs averſe, than, by forcing its introduction at the outſet, ſhut up the way to farther progreſs. Every doctrine ſhould be unfolded

gradually, judiciouſly, temperately, not inſiſting on any points that are not clearly Scriptural, nor on any that admit of doubtful diſputation, nor on many points at a time; and, above all, on none unſeaſonably, or unceaſingly.

This habit of turning time to account, by endeavouring to be uſeful to others, will, if conducted with mildneſs, and exerciſed with Chriſtian humility, be eminently beneficial to ourſelves. It will ſet us on a cloſer examination of the truths we ſuggeſt; and, in contending with blindneſs and ſelf-ſufficiency, we ſhall find a wholeſome exerciſe for our own patience and moderation. It may remind us, that we were once, perhaps, in the ſame ſtate. Above all, it will put us on a more ſtrict watchfulneſs over our own hearts and lives, leſt we ſhould be adopting one ſet of principles for our converſation, and another for our conduct. It will induce the neceſſity of a more exact conſiſtency, as they, to whom we are counſellors,

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will not be backward, if we furniſh them with the leaſt ground, to be our cenſurers.

And here I would affectionately ſuggeſt to my numerous amiable young friends, the benefit to be derived to their own minds from the perſonal inſtruction of the poor, for which ſo wide a field is juſt now providentially opened. In communicating the elements of religious knowledge — in numberleſs repetitions of the ſame plain truths — in being obliged to begin again the ſimple document which they fancied they had long ago impreſſed — in the humbling neceſſity of lowering their ideas, and debaſing their language, in order to make themſelves intelligible — in the forbearance which dulneſs of intellect, perverſeneſs of temper, and ingratitude demand, they may gain ſome proficiency themſelves, even where their ſucceſs with others is leaſt encouraging.

But to whatever account we turn our time with reſpect to others, the firſt object of its right employment is with ourſelves;

and this not only in difcharging thofe exercifes of piety and virtue, which are too obvious and too generally acknowledged, to require to be fpecified; but, in attending to the fecret difpofitions of the mind, in order to afcertain its real character. We do not mean to imply hat we can judge of its ftate by the thougnts which are neceffarily fuggefted by any actual bufinefs, or any preffing object, fuch thoughts being the proper demand of the occafion, and not any certain indication of our abiding ftate and habitual temper. But, by watching the nature and tendency of our fpontaneous thoughts, we may, in a great meafure, determine on the character of our minds; their voluntary thoughts and unprompted feelings, being the ftreams which indicate the fountain whence they flow. The heart is that perennial fpring; for, whether grace or nature fupply the current, the fountain is inexhauftible. In either cafe, the more abundantly it flows, the more conftantly its wafte is fed by frefh fupplies; expence, in-

ſtead of exhauſting, augments the ſtream whether the ſource from earth ſupply worldly thoughts, or that from above ſuch as are heavenly. Thoughts determine on the character: *as the man thinketh, ſo is he.*

What a ſcene will open upon us, when, from our eternal ſtate, we ſhall look back on the uſe we have made of time! What a revolution will be wrought in our opinions! What a contraſt will be exhibited, when we ſhall take a clear retroſpect of all we have done, and all we ought to have done! And ſhall we then put off the inſpection to an uncertain period, to a period, when we can neither repent to any purpoſe for what was wrong, nor begin to do what we ſhall then perceive would have been right? Let theſe frequent meditations on death, lead us to reflect what the feelings of a dying-bed will be. Let us think now what will then be the review of riches mis-ſpent, of talents neglected or perverted, of influence abuſed, of learning miſapplied, of time miſemployed! To entertain ſerious thoughts

of death now, is the moſt likely method for rectifying tempers, for conquering propenſities, for eſtabliſhing principles, for confirming habits, of which we ſhall then feel the conſequences; for relinquiſhing enterpriſes and purſuits, for the ſucceſs of which we may then be as much afflicted, as we ſhould now be at their defeat.

He who cannot find time to conſult his Bible, will find, one day, that he has time to be ſick; he who has no time to pray, muſt find time to die. He who can find no time to reflect, is moſt likely to find time to ſin; he who cannot find time for repentance, will find an eternity in which repentance will be of no avail. Let us, then, under the influence of the Divine ſpirit, ſeriouſly reflect, under what law we came into the world: "it is apointed for all men once to *die*, and, after death, the JUDGEMENT." Is it not obvious, then, that the deſign of life is to prepare for judgment; and that, in proportion as we employ time well, we make immortality happy?

CHAP. VIII.

Charity.

IN that general uſe of the Talents, ſuggeſted in the parable, there is alſo a particular vocation, on the exerciſe of which, every man muſt equitably determine. Each is particularly called upon to acquit himſelf of that more immediate duty, for the practice of which, God has given ſpecial endowments and opportunity. Our Maker requires the ſpecific exerciſe of the ſpecific talent. The nature of the gift points out the nature of the requiſition. The uſe of the endowment is a peculiar debt, a marked obligation. This is not a gift confounded with the maſs of his gifts, but one by which God deſigns to be, by that individual, more remarkably glorified.

But *charity* is a virtue of all times and all places. It is not ſo much an independent

grace

grace in itſelf, as an energy, which gives the laſt touch and higheſt finiſh to every other, and reſolves them all into one common principle. It is called "the very bond of perfectneſs," not only becauſe it unites us to God, our ultimate perfection, but becauſe it ties all the other virtues together, and refers them thus concatenated, to Him, their common ſource and centre.

St. Peter having given a preſſing exhortation to many exalted duties, finiſhes by aſcribing to charity this emphatical ſuperiority; "*Above all things*, have fervent charity." It is, indeed, the prolific principle of all duty: a confluence of every thing that is lovely and amiable: the fountain from which all excellencies flow, the ſtream in which they all meet. It is not ſubject to the ebb and flow of paſſion or partiality — it is true Chriſtian ſympathy. It is tender without weakneſs; it does not ariſe from that conſtitutional ſoftneſs which may be rather infirmity than virtue. It is the affection of the Goſpel; a love derived from the Spirit of

of Chrift, and reciprocally communicated among his genuine followers.

Charity comprehends an indefinitely wide fphere, both in feeling and doing. According to the arrangement of St. Paul, in his beautiful perfonification of this grace *, fhe may be faid to embrace almoft the whole fcheme of religious, perfonal, and focial duty. "Patient and kind," fhe does not wait to be folicited to acts of benignity, fhe feizes the occafion — fhe does more, fhe watches for it. She "endures" evils, but inflicts none; fhe does not felect her trials, but "bears all things." Though "fhe believes all things," yet fhe exercifes her hope without relinquifhing her prudence; fometimes, where conviction forbids her thinking favourably, even then it does not prevent "her hoping all things." She fubdues "vaunting," conquers the fwellings of infolence, and the untractablenefs of pride. Not only "fhe envieth not," not only fhe difallows the injuftice of defiring

* Corinthians, chap. xiii.

what is another's, but, by a noble diſdain of ſelfiſhneſs, ſhe even "ſeeketh not her own." Her diſintereſtedneſs ſtirs her up to the perpetual rooting out that principle wrought by nature into the conſtitution of the ſoul. So far from thinking it a proof of ſpirit to reſent injuries, ſhe is not "eaſily provoked" by them. She ſmooths the fierceneſs of the iraſcible, and corrects the acrimony of the evil-tempered. She not only does not perpetrate, but "ſhe thinketh no evil." She has found a ſhorter way of becoming rich than avarice ever invented, for charity makes another's goods her own by a ſimple proceſs; without diſpoſſeſſing the proprietor, ſhe rejoices ſo much in another's proſperity that it becomes hers, becauſe it is his.

Here we ſee that the Apoſtle places charity not only before all the virtues which he thus gracefully marſhals, before qualities the moſt moral, gifs the moſt ſpiritual, attainments the moſt intellectual, but he actually degrades theſe laſt in the compariſon; he

does not barely lower their value, he annihilates it. Without this principle of life, this ſoul of duty, this eſſence of goodneſs, they are not only little, they are nothing. Without charity, poſſeſſions, talents, exertions, are all fruitleſs. They are of no value in the ſight of God: they are of no efficacy to our ſalvation. Charity alone ſanctifies our offerings, recommends our prayers, and makes our very praiſes acceptable.

And though nothing is formally efficacious but the blood and merits of Chriſt, yet charity, as a divine grace, and one that will never ceaſe, ſhews that our intereſt on him, and union with him, are real and genuine.

But to deſcend to particulars, and apply them to the common purpoſes of life.— Whenever we are promoting the good of mankind, either by aſſiſting public inſtitutions, or relieving individuals, we are obviouſly helping on the cauſe of charity; and, when we cannot effectively aſſiſt the work, we may exerciſe the principle; we may pray

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for the happineſs which we cannot confer, and rejoice in every addition to the general good towards which we cannot contribute. On the other hand, the purſe may ſometimes be open where the heart is ſhut. And it is perhaps a more rare and a higher virtue to exerciſe forbearance towards the faults, and to put a candid conſtruction on the actions, of others, than to ſupply their wants, or promote their temporal intereſts. But whether candour in judging, or liberality in giving, be the virtue in exerciſe, by the adoption of each as a law, and the practice of both on the ground of conformity to the Divine will, we ſhall acquire ſuch a habit of exerciſing the kind affections, that what was adopted as a principle will be eſtabliſhed into a pleaſure; what was a force upon nature, will almoſt grow into a part of it; obligation will become choice, law impulſe, duty neceſſity; the energy will become ſo powerful, that the heart will involuntarily ſpring to the performance; indolence, ſelfiſhneſs, trouble, inconvenience, will vaniſh

vanifh under the vigorous operation of a habit whofe motive is genuine Chriftianity.

One Chriftian grace is never exercifed at the expence of another, nor is it perfect, unlefs it promotes that other. Thus charity enjoys abftinently that fhe may give liberally. While fhe reftrains every wrong inclination, fhe ftimulates as to fuch as are right. She is never a folitary quality, but is infeparably linked with truth and equity. She leads us perpetually to examine our means, difpofitions, and opportunities, and to exert their combined force for the promotion of the greateft poffible good. She teaches us to contribute to the comfort of others as well as to their neceffities. She converts fmall kindneffes into great ones, by doing them with reference to God; for it is not fo much the worth, as the temper, which will render them acceptable to Him.

We muft not judge of our charity by fingle acts and particular inftances, for they are not always good men who do good things, but by our general tendencies and propen-

propenſities. We muſt ſtrive after an uniformity in our charity — examine whether it be equable, ſteady, voluntary, and not a charity of times, and ſeaſons, and humours. If we are as unkind and illiberal in one inſtance as we are profuſe in another, when the demand is equal, and we have both the choice and the means, whatever we may be, we are not charitable.

Though charity, as we have already obſerved, is a quality of univerſal application, and by no means limited within the narrow bounds of alms-giving, yet, not to allow a due, that is, a high rank and ſtation to thoſe works of benevolence, to which our Redeemer gives ſo conſpicuous a place in his exhibition of the ſcrutiny at the general judgment, would be miſtaking the genius of Chriſtianity, would be departing from the practice and the principles of its Founder; it would be forgetting the high dignity he conferred on this grace, when he declared that he ſhould conſider the meaneſt work of

love done to the leaſt of his followers for his ſake as done to himſelf.

This pecuniary charity is not to be limited to our particular connections—muſt not be confined to unfounded attachments, to party-favourites. It muſt be governed by the law of juſtice. We muſt not do a little good to one which may involve a greater injury to another: yet, though we ſhould keep our hearts always open, and our feelings alive to the general benefit, ſtill, as our power muſt be inevitably contracted, whatever right others may have to our beneficence, local circumſtances, natural expectations, and preſſing neceſſity, confer the more immediate claim. The *moſt* immediate is that of the houſehold of faith.

From hence it appears, that in enquiring into the duties of charity, we muſt not overlook the uſe to be made of riches, one of the talents implied in the parable. The application of money, whether "kept by their owners to their hurt," or ſquandered to their deſtruction, will equally be made the

the ſubject of final inveſtigation. Lord Bacon's remark, that "riches, when kept in a heap, are corrupt like a dunghill, but, when ſpread abroad, diffuſe beauty and fertility," has been more admired than acted upon. All the fine ſentences that have been pelted at the head of covetouſneſs have probably never reformed one miſer; nor have the moſt pointed aphoriſms, not divinely directed, ever taught the luxurious the true uſe of money. Happily the age in which we live is ſo generally diſpoſed to acts of beneficence, that there never was a period which leſs impoſed the neceſſity to preſs the duty, to enforce the practice, or to point out the objects. A thouſand new channels are opened, yet the old ones are not dried up; the ſtreams flow in abundance, as if fed by a perennial fountain.

Let not any one, however, intrench himſelf in the ſuppoſed ſecurity of ſurrounding goodneſs. Let not any take comfort that he lives in an age of charity, if he himſelf is not charitable. We are not benevolent by

contact

contact or infection, or by breathing an atmosphere of charity. Yet who has not heard persons exultingly boast of this noble characteristic of the age, who are by no means remarkable for contributing their own contingent towards establishing its character? Doubtless, many a man gloried in the valour of his country, and exulted in the pride of being an Englishman, after the battles of Trafalgar and Salamanca, who, had he been sent into the action, would have been shot for cowardice.

Who has not seen the ready eye discharge its kindly showers at a tale of woe, and the frugal sentimentalist comfort himself that his tears had paid more cheaply the debt of benevolence, for which his purse had been solicited. The Author, many years ago, made one in a party of friends; an expected guest, who was rather late, at length came in; she was in great agitation, having been detained on the road by a dreadful fire in the neighbourhood. The poor family, who were gone to bed, had been with difficulty

ficulty awakened. The mother had eſcaped by throwing herſelf from a two pair of ſtairs window into the ſtreet. She then recollected, that, in her extreme terror, ſhe had left her child behind in bed. To the aſtoniſhment of all preſent, ſhe inſtantly ruſhed back through the flames, and, to the general joy, ſoon appeared with the child alive in her arms. While ſhe was expreſſing her gratitude, the light of the lamps fell on its face, and ſhe perceived, to her inexpreſſible horror, that ſhe had ſaved the child of another woman — her own had periſhed. It may be imagined what were the feelings of the company. A ſubſcription was inſtantly begun. Almoſt every one had liberally contributed, when a Nobleman, who could have bought the whole party, turning to the writer of theſe pages ſaid, "Madam, I will give you —" every expecting eye was turned to the Peer, knowing him to be unuſed to the giving mood; the perſon addreſſed joyfully held out her hand, but drew it back on his coolly ſaying, "I will give you this affecting

affecting incident for the ſubject of your next tragedy." Some will read this paſſage who were preſent on the occaſion.

But ſince neither the logic nor the rhetoric of the writer, were ſhe ſo happy as to poſſeſs either, is likely to make the "churl liberal," or to ſtir up the vain or the voluptuous to a beneficence which ſhall bear any fair proportion to the coſtly maintenance of their luxury or their vanity, the ſlight obſervations which follow ſhall be addreſſed to the bountiful giver, a character, bleſſed be God, as common as it is amiable. To the act it is unneceſſary to excite him; to the motive he cannot too carefully look. This is the more requiſite, as, in an age in which more excellent charity ſermons are annually preached than ever were delivered ſince the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity — that, which alone of all the religions in the world, ever made charitable foundations a part of its inſtitution — we now and then meet with one, which ſeems to invert the principle, and to put the point for the baſe. It is with dif-

fidence we put the queſtion, dreading to be ſuſpected of indulging a ſpirit of cenſure where we would wiſh to offer unqualified commendation; but do we not now and then hear aſſigned to almſgiving, nay aſſigned to the individual contribution for which the well-intentioned preacher is eloquently pleading, a merit ſo vaſt, that it would ſeem to ſupply the abſence of all other merits; a merit which would almoſt induce one to believe that a more than ordinary contribution to the plate would prove a golden key, to ſtand in *his* ſtead, who "has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers?"

To explain my meaning by an example: — In the Temple of *Him* who gave his ſon to die, to atone for the ſins of the world, I once heard, and from no mean authority, Charity called *the atoning virtue of the age.* To have termed it the prevailing, the diſtinguiſhing, the moſt amiable characteriſtic of the age, had been right and true. But when I found it thus gravely propoſed as an expiation for ſin, I was ready to imagine that

I heard

I heard the exclamation of St. Paul to his Galatians — "I marvel that ye are fo foon removed from him that called you unto the grace of Chrift unto another Gofpel."

We moft readily not only allow for, but admire, the ardour of an animated preacher who, feeling his heart expand with his fubject, finds it as much his delight, as his duty, to impart to every bofom the tender and compaffionate fympathies with which his own overflows; and it is with reluctance we have prefumed to intimate the reftraints, which Chriftian piety fhould impofe on itfelf in not overftating even a Chriftian duty.

We have no right to determine on the proportions and poffibilities of any man's charity, but on the principle we may determine; there muft be an exhauftlefs fpring in the heart, even where the Chriftian's means will not admit of a perpetual current. Love is in fact that motive, without which neither faith, nor myfteries, nor martyrdom, no nor even the addition of the fecond guinea to the plate, where only one had been in-

 tended,

tended, nor giving all our goods to the poor, will profit any thing. Where this vital ſpirit is wanting the moſt ample bounty will not reach its end; where it exiſts, "the cup of cold water" ſhall be accepted. Without this animating principle, though the bounty may obtain applauſe, may influence others, may do good, and promote good, yet it may unhappily fall ſhort of promoting the ſpiritual intereſts of the giver. He who has promiſed to render to every man according to his deeds, knows the principle of the deed, and has never promiſed to recompence any which has no reference to himſelf.

To neglect works of charity, not to be largely liberal in the performance of them according to our ability, is an infallible evidence that our profeſſions of piety mean nothing. On the other hand, to depend upon them as what is to bear us out in our claims for heaven, before the tribunal of God, is to offend our Maker and deceive our own ſouls. We would be the very laſt

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to undervalue, or to difcourage charity, but is it difcouraging it to place it on its true ground; to affert that we may build an hofpital without charity, as we may endow a church without piety, if we confider the one as an expiation for fin, or the other as a fubftitution for holinefs?

Some are ingenious in contriving, by a ftrange felf-delufion, to fwell the amount of their charity, by tacking to it extraneous items of a totally diftinct character. The Author was formerly acquainted with a lady of rank, who, though her benevolence was fufpected to bear no proportion to the fplendor of her eftablifhment, was yet rather too apt to make her bounties a fubject of converfation. After enumerating the various inftances of her beneficence, fhe often concluded by faying, "notwithftanding my large family I give all this in charity *befides paying the poor rates*;" thus converting a compulfory act, to which all are equally fubject, into a voluntary bounty.

Our corruptions are ſo liable to infect even our "holy things," that we ſhould be vigilant in this beſt exerciſe of the beſt affections of the heart — affections which God, when he graciouſly converted a duty into a delight, gave us, in order by a pleaſurable feeling, to ſtir us up to compaſſion. We ſhould be careful that the great enemy may not be plotting our injury, even when we are performing actions the moſt hoſtile to his intereſts.

As there is not a more lovely virtue in the whole Chriſtian code, ſo there is not one which more imperatively demands our attention to the ſpirit with which we exerciſe it, and the temper with which we bear the diſappointment ſometimes attending our beſt intended bounties. Though charity is too frequently thrown away on thoſe who receive it, it is never loſt on the benefactor, if "he who gives, does it with ſimplicity." When the bountiful giver cannot find pleaſure, he may always extract

extract good. He may reap no ſmall advantage himſelf from that liberality which has failed to confer any. He may gain benefit from the diſappointment he experiences in the unworthineſs of the objeect. When the project he had anxiouſly formed for doing good to another is defeated by perverſeneſs, or requited by ingratitude, it not only does not check the ſpring of bounty in the real Chriſtian, but it calls new virtues into action. The exerciſe of patience, an improvement in forbearance and forgiveneſs, a ſtronger conviction that we muſt not make the worthineſs of the object the ſole meaſure of our bounty, are well worth the money we have ſpent on the undeſerving. Perhaps too the reiterated inſtances how little good the beſt man is able to do in this world, may ſerve to wean him from it, and be an additional inducement for looking forward to a better.

But it is much eaſier to relieve our neighbour's wants, than to bear with his errors; the one gratifies our natural feelings, while

the other offends them; the moſt difficult as well as the moſt ſublime branch of charity therefore, is the forgiveneſs of injuries, is the love of our enemies. It is a love humbly aiming to reſemble his, who ſends his rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt; a love not inſpired by partiality, not extorted by merit. It is following the example, while we obey the precept of Chriſt, when we "do good to them that hate us." It is a charity which burſts with a generous diſdain the narrow bounds of attachment and even of deſert, levels every fence which ſelfiſh prudence would erect between itſelf and its enemies; it is a love, with reſpect to the objects, though with a boundleſs diſproportion as to the meaſure, reſembling God's love to us; it aims to be univerſal in kind, though it is low in the degree.

A very able divine * has inſiſted that it is to this part of the character of the Almighty that our Saviour limits the injunction,

* See Biſhop Sherlock's ſermon on the text, "Be ye perfect," &c. &c.

"Be

"Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." It is, indeed, one of the principal inftances in which finite creatures can by imitation approximate to the character of God; moft of his attributes rather requiring us to adore, than leaving it poffible for us to imitate them. For though all the attributes of God afford the moft exalted idea of complete perfection, yet the injunction to attain his image is ftrikingly applied in the New Teftament to this particular part of the divine character. The Apoftle applies our being "followers of God, as dear children" afterwards to this individual inftance, "forgiving one another, even as God for Chrift's fake has forgiven you," adding, "and walk in love as Chrift alfo loved us." "So that," fays the Bifhop, "his exhortation to follow God ftands inclofed on both fides with the precepts of love and charity, as if he intended to fecure it from being applied to any thing elfe." St. Luke, who gives us an abridgment of the fame fermon on the mount from which the

the paſſage is taken, alſo ſuggeſts the practice of love and forgiveneſs from the example of the Almighty, "who is kind to the unthankful and the evil." After having delivered the ſame beatitude, he corroborates the interpretation with an injunction, by ſaying, not be *perfect*, but "be merciful as your Father alſo is merciful."

Our Saviour impreſſed a ſolemn emphaſis on the command to forgive the offences of others, when he implicated it with God's forgiveneſs of us. It is to be feared, that many who would think it an act of diſobedience to omit the daily repetition of the divine prayer, of which this requeſt forms ſo ſtriking a clauſe, do not lay to heart the daily duty of ſupplicating for that frame of ſpirit which the petiiion involves. Can there be a more awful conſideration, than that we put the grand requeſt on which our eternal happineſs depends, on this iſſue, when we inſeparably aſſociate our own hope of pardon, with the required and reaſonable

condition

condition of pardoning others? Should we not be conſcientiouſly cautious, how we put up this petition, when we reflect, that we offer it to the great Searcher of hearts, who, while he liſtens to the requeſt, can exactly determine on the integrity which accompanies it? The divine Author of the prayer ſeems to hold out a ſort of teſt of the ſpirit of our obedience, when he propoſes this difficult duty, as a trial of our general conformity to his commands. It ſeems ſelected by infinite wiſdom as a kind of pledge of our ſubmiſſion to his will in all other points: our intereſt is confederate with our duty in the practice of this high and peculiarly Chriſtian grace. The requiſition ſuggeſts at once the moſt abſolute obligation, and the moſt powerful motive.

This forgiveneſs ſeems not only to be one of the grand diſtinctions between the religion of the Heathen and the Chriſtian world, but to form a conſiderable difference between the duties inculcated in the Old and the New Teſtament. In the former, indeed,

indeed, there were not only indications and suggeſtions of this rule, but ſome exemplifications of its actual performance. It is remarkable, that when David, whoſe energy of character, or rather myſterious inſpiration as a prophet, led him to be ſo vehement in his denunciations of vengeance on perſons of profeſſed enmity againſt God, and againſt himſelf as the anointed of God, yet exhibited eminent inſtances of placability in his conduct towards his own perſonal enemies, eſpecially in the caſe of Saul. But, perhaps, the duty, after all, was not ſo fully made out, ſo clearly defined, ſo poſitively enjoined,, nor was the frame of mind ſo evidently ſeen in "them of old time." We have many inſtances under that diſpenſation, of ſaints and prophets laying down their lives for their religion, but it was reſerved for the firſt New Teſtament Martyr, when expiring under a ſhower of ſtones from his enemies, to ſay, "Lord, lay not this ſin to their charge." The reaſon is obvious. It being expected, that our notions and prac-

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tices ſhould be adapted to the revelation under which we live, this ſublime ſpecies of charity ſhould neceſſarily riſe in proportion to the clearneſs and dignity of that diſpenſation. It is congruous, therefore, that our forgiveneſs of injuries ſhould be exerciſed in far higher perfection under the Goſpel, the profeſſed object of which was to make a full and perfect revelation of the pardon of ſin by the blood of a Redeemer. And we can only be ſaid to have a conformity to his image, in proportion as we practiſe this grace. Let us, however, remember, to borrow the thought of an eminent divine, "that our forgiving others will not alone procure forgiveneſs for ourſelves, while our not forgiving others is a plain proof, that we ourſelves are not forgiven."

CHAP. X.

On Prejudice.

THERE is not a more curious ſubject of ſpeculation, than to obſerve the variety of colours with which opinion tinges truth; the bias which prejudice lends to facts, when it cannot deny them; the perverſion it gives to the motive, when it cannot invalidate the circumſtance; the warp and twiſt it gives to actions which it dares not openly condemn; the diſingenuouſneſs into which it ſlides, even though it does not intend to maintain a falſehood; the bright rays with which it gilds, perhaps unconſciouſly, its own ſide of a queſtion; the dark cloud by which it caſts that of an adverſary into ſhade.

Prejudice, if not altogether invincible, is, perhaps, the moſt difficult of all errors to be eradicated from the human mind. By diſguiſing itſelf under the reſpectable name of firmneſs,

firmneſs, it is of infinitely ſlower extirpation than actual vice. For vice, though perſiſted in through the perverſeneſs of the will, never ſets itſelf up for virtue; a vicious man knows what is right, though his appetites deter him from following it; but a prejudice, being perhaps more frequently a fault of the judgment than of the heart, is ſometimes perſiſted in upon principle. No man will defend a ſin as ſuch, but even good men defend a prejudice, though every one elſe ſees that it is producing all the effect of a ſin, promoting hatred, ſouring the temper, and exciting evil paſſions.

Yet, though it may incidentally be attached to a good man, there are few errors more calculated to eſtrange the heart from vital religion, becauſe there are none under which men reſt ſo ſatisfied. Under the practice of any immorality they are uneaſy, and that uneaſineſs may lead to a cure; for the light of natural conſcience is ſufficiently ſtrong to ſhew, that ſin and peace cannot dwell together. But prejudice effectually

keeps

keeps a man from enquiring after truth, because he conceives that he is in full poſſeſſion of it, and that he is following it up in the very error which keeps him ſo wide of it. Or if, with the Roman governor, he aſk, "what *is* truth;" like him, he turns away for fear of an anſwer. The ſtrongeſt light cannot penetrate eyes that are cloſed againſt it; while to the humble, who deſire illumination, God gives not only the object, but the faculty of diſcerning it.

As it is mental, rather than moral prejudice, which is the preſent ſubject of conſideration, we ſhall ſay little of thoſe prejudices of which the paſſions and appetites are the cauſe. Intereſt and ſenſuality ſee the objects which abſorb them through their own denſe medium, while the viſion of either is probably clear enough in judging of the objects of the other's paſſion; the blindneſs being partial, and confined, like the lunacy of ſome diſordered patients, to the ſingle object to which the diſeaſe has a reference.

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Even probity itſelf is not of ſufficient force to guide our conduct; we ſee men of ſound integrity and of good judgment on ſubjects where prejudice does not intervene, acting, where it does, below the ſtandard of ordinary men, governed by a name, carried away by a ſound. It makes lovers of truth unjuſt, and converts wiſdom into fatuity. It muſt, therefore, be an enlightened probity, or we may be injuring our fellow-creatures, when we perſuade ourſelves we are doing God ſervice. Paul does not appear to have been a profligate, but to have been correct, zealous, and moral, and to have earned a high reputation among his own narrow and prejudiced ſect. His error was in his judgment. The error of Peter was in his affections. A ſudden touch of ſelf-love in this vacillating, but warm-hearted diſciple, made him dread to ſhare in his Maſter's diſgrace. But, in this caſe, a ſingle penetrating glance melted his very ſoul, brought him back to contrition, repentance, and love. To cure the prejudices of Paul, a miracle was neceſſary. While the powerful arguments of

of our Lord put even the Sadducees, the infidels of the day, "to ſilence," they produced no ſuch effect on the profeſſing Phariſees; inſtead of rejoicing to hear their great doctrine of the reſurrection ſo fully vindicated, they redoubled their prejudices againſt him, at the very moment in which he had obtained ſuch a triumph in their cauſe. The firſt thing they endeavoured, was to entangle, by their caſuiſtry, him who had juſt defeated the common enemy.

But, let us judge even the prejudiced without prejudice. Prejudice, to a certain degree, is not ſo much the fault of the individual, as of our common nature. And that ſober tincture of it, which is inſeparable from habits and attachments, is a fair and honeſt prepoſſeſſion: — for inſtance, Whoever reprobated, as a cenſurable prejudice, that generous feeling,

> For which our Country is a name ſo dear?

But, after all, prejudice, of ſome kind or other, is a natural inborn error, attached to

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that blindneſs which is an incurable part of our conſtitution.

Diſagreement of opinion, therefore, if it be an evil inſeparable from our preſent ſtate of being, ought not to excite antipathy; complete unanimity of heart and ſentiment being reſerved as part of the happineſs of that more perfect ſtate, where the effulgence of truth will diſſipate all the error and miſ-apprehenſion which cloud our judgment here.

People commonly intend to judge fairly; and, when they fail, it is as often an error of the underſtanding as of the heart. They form their opinion of ſome particular ſubject from what they ſee of it. But though they ſee only a part, they frequently form their opinion of that which remains unſeen, more peremptorily than thoſe who ſee the whole; for a large and clear view, by affording a juſtneſs of conception, commonly induces humility. Perhaps, on their ignorance of thoſe very parts of a queſtion which they do not ſee, they form their deciſion on

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the whole; while the unſeen points are preciſely thoſe which only could enable them to determine fairly on the general propoſition.

We ſhould not, however, very ſeverely cenſure any for the mere opinion they form, this being a matter of the judgment rather than of the will; the true object of cenſure is their conduct under this falſe impreſſion; in acting as hoſtilely as if their opinion was founded on the beſt aſcertained facts. If we are all more or leſs prejudiced, it does not follow, that the conſcientious act upon the feelings which the prejudice has excited. The harſh and the intolerant, indeed, let looſe upon their adverſaries all the bad paſſions which this diſpoſition to prejudge opinions has ſtirred up; while the mild ſpirit in which Chriſtianity governs, will conduct itſelf with the ſame general kindneſs as if no diverſity of opinion ſubſiſted. Though all prepoſſeſſion ariſes from ſome cloudineſs in the mind, it is a fair trial of the Chriſtian temper, when the man who ſuffers by it, continues to exerciſe the ſame tolerant and

indulgent

indulgent ſpirit towards the prejudiced party, as if there were a mutual concurrence of ſentiment. If he have no other ground of objection to the perſon from whom he differs, there is ſomething of a large and liberal ſpirit in acting with him, and ſpeaking of him, on other occaſions, as if the matter in debate did not exiſt.

How endleſs and intricate are the miſleadings of political prejudice! It is as detailed and minute in its operations, as it is broad and extenſive in its compaſs. Will not the circumſtance of voting on the ſame ſide often ſtand inſtead of the beſt qualities, in recommending one man to the good opinion of another? With this unfounded partiality is naturally connected a diſlike to better men, on the mere ground of their taking the oppoſite ſide; for party, which takes ſuch a large permiſſion to think and act for itſelf, takes care never to allow to others the liberty which it ſo broadly and uniformly aſſumes.

He who drinks deep into the ſpirit of party, minutely pencils all the ſhades of miſ-

reprefentation; his prejudice blackening, his partiality whitening; the one deforming what is fair, the other beautifying what is foul; the one defacing temples, the other garnifhing fepulchres. Providence, in the meantime, working its own way by thefe perverfe inftruments; the worft defigners being fometimes furprifed into doing more good than they intended, by a wifh to anticipate the good projected by the oppofite party, and fo to throw an odium upon them, for not having been able to effect the fame, though they had perhaps planned it, and though adverfe circumftances alone had interrupted the fcheme, or the want of a fuitable occafion had delayed its accomplifhment. Thus good is effected, the public is benefited, all are pleafed. The confcientious rejoice that it is done at any rate; the prejudiced, that their party have the credit of doing it.

There are among the exhauftlefs manœuvres of a party-champion, if I may fo fpeak, geftures and figns of difapprobation, which are

are of equal efficacy with language itſelf. There are alſo artifices in writing, that reſemble intonation and accent in a ſkilful ſpeaker, which, by a turn of the voice, or a clauſe in a parentheſis, throw in a ſhade of diſtinction, lend an emphaſis which makes myſtery intelligible, and helps out the apprehenſion of the reader. There is ſuch a thing as an intellectual ſhrug of the ſhoulders, a mental ſhake of the head, an implication that has more meaning than an aſſertion, a hint which can effectually detract from the commendation which prudence had extorted, and which ſerves to awaken ſuſpicion more than a direct charge. Whatever is omitted, is ſure to be more than ſupplied; whatever is dexterouſly left open by the writer, never fails to be over-charged by the reader, who always values himſelf on his ingenuity in filling up an hiatus. There is a way of ſetting out with general praiſe, in order to make the meditated charge more effectual. A practiſed reader will ſee through the artful circumlocutory preface, which is gradually pre-

paring to introduce the little, though effectually diſparaging particle *but*. Theſe artifices raiſe up the ghoſt of ſome unknown evil in the character to be injured, and excite, at the ſame time, the idea of prudence and moderation in the cenſurer. It is a myſterious giving out, an aſſumed regret at being compelled to ſpeak, a hypocritical conſcientiouſneſs, a reluctance of communication which, after it has told much more than all it knows, tenderly affects to have kept back the worſt.

One evil which commonly ariſes from the peruſal of a work of ſyſtematic oppoſition, whether the object be public or private, is, that it has a tendency to bias the more liberal reader, who took it up in the moſt impartial ſtate of mind, with as undue a prejudice in favour of the party attacked, as the aſſailant laboured to eſtabliſh in favour of his own; ſo that, if any injuſtice be excited, it is on the contrary ſide to that which the author intended. Generally ſpeaking, however, people do not ſit down with

with a pure defign to read impartially any thing, which, from the title of the work, or the name of the author, they forefee or fufpect is likely to contradict their creed, whether previoufly adopted from conviction or prepoffeffion.

But, to confine our obfervations to the prejudices which embitter common life:—when we fancy we have been injured by fome unfounded evil report, let us avoid confidering the character of the reporter, or our own fuppofed injury, under the immediate impreffion of the intelligence, but try to divert our thoughts to fome other fubject, till our heated fpirits have time to cool. We fhall otherwife, too probably, feel and utter many things which exceed the bounds of ftrict juftice. When the refentment has, in fome meafure, fubfided, let us endeavour to collect and to retain only the fimple and exact truth; what the enemy really faid, and not what we fufpected he might fay. Let us retrench all that is imaginary, all that is merely fufpicion; let us cut off all the

aggravations of conjecture, all the inventions of paſſion, all the additions of revenge, all that belongs to unſubſtantiated report;—when theſe due retrenchments are made, we ſhall often ſee that the injury is not ſo great. It is no wonder if the object we ſaw through a miſt was enlarged; a clear medium reduces it to its natural ſize.

But, ſuppoſing the worſt to be true; religion, operating on experience, will at length teach us to ſet theſe metaphyſical evils, theſe afflictions of the imagination, this anguiſh of wounded pride or irritated ſelf-love, over againſt the real, deep, ſubſtantial miſeries of body and mind, under which thouſands of our fellow-creatures, nay many of our friends, are at the moment ſinking; and we ſhall bluſh at our own irritability; we ſhall bleſs God for the lightneſs of our own lot; we ſhall even be thankful for that evil which exiſts only in the opinion, or the report of a fallible creature, and which makes no part of our real ſelf.

But,

But, above all, let us never revenge the injury by oppoſing *our* injuſtice to that by which we ſuffer, by acting againſt our opponents with the ſame ſpirit with which we accuſe them of acting againſt us. Retaliation, which is the juſtice of a vulgar mind, is of the very eſſence of an unchriſtian ſpirit. Where this is indulged, all the virtues of the adverſary are rooted out by our reſentment, and it is well, if we do not plant vices in their room. Or if we do not invent faults for them, are we not too much diſpoſed to take comfort in thoſe they have; to cheriſh unkind reports of them, to give them a welcome hearing and a wide circulation? Nay, ſelf-eſtimation and rooted prejudice may lead us entirely to miſtake the character of him we call our enemy. A man is not neceſſarily wicked becauſe he does not admire us. He may diſlike ſome of our notions without hating our perſons; or, after all, his prejudices may not be entirely ill founded; and if we will examine urſelv es on the ground of his charge in

ſome particular inſtance, we may find, that we have been wrong in a way which we might not have diſcovered without him. If his detection of our error lead us to correct it, we ſhould not reckon that man among our worſt enemies: or, if we ſhould happen to be right, there is a great advantage in being aſſiſted by the mode of attack, to know how to collect materials for our defence.

We muſt alſo learn ſometimes to endure cenſure for things right in themſelves, and, under exiſting circumſtances, neceſſary, which yet may not appear right to others, becauſe it may not be prudent to diſcloſe thoſe ſecret ſprings of action, which, if revealed, would convince others that we have not acted wrong. Inſtead of ſpending our ſpirits in invective, or ſpoiling our temper by hatred; inſtead of liking our faults the better, or adhering to them the more, becauſe pointed out by thoſe we diſlike; would it not be wiſer to enquire, if our opinions may not be prejudices, as well as theirs? For it

it does not inevitably follow, that even the diflike of bad men is any certain proof of our goodnefs; though our natural propenfity to think our own conduct and opinions right, difpofes us to think them more right in proportion to the oppofition which is made to either. We are blind to our own fingularities, even though thofe fingularities may be errors; and a fpirit of refentment or refiftance makes that blindnefs often more obftinate. On the other hand, may we not be too much difpofed to think our cenfurers, whom we call wicked, more wicked than they are; or, though there may be errors in their conduct, this does not take from them the capacity of judging of ours. Even though their hearts are wrong, their judgment, as far as relates to others, may not be totally perverted. It is no infallible proof of their bad judgment, that they think meanly of ours.

But allowing that their judgment is as incorrect as their practice, and that their diflike proceeds from the "ftrong antipathy

of bad to good," yet we may turn this dislike to profit. That hoſtility to religion, of which the Scripture ſo frequently ſpeaks, is not intended to give the Chriſtian a high notion of his own piety, but to encourage him againſt the fear and dejection which that hoſtility might create. If he meet with oppoſition, he muſt not fly for refuge to his own goodneſs, as contraſted with the faults of his opponents; nor muſt he be depreſſed, "as if ſome ſtrange thing had happened to him;" much leſs muſt he convert the oppoſition he meets with, into an evidence, that he is in all inſtances right. In the conſolations which the Goſpel holds out to the ſufferer for righteouſneſs'-ſake, it was intended to inſpire him with courage, not vanity; with confidence in God, not in himſelf. He muſt not, therefore, ſo much value himſelf becauſe he has enemies, as ſuſpect that he may have enemies, becauſe he has deſerved them. Or perhaps, there is ſomething wrong in us which we have not yet diſcovered, for which God permits us to

have

have enemies. This fufpicion may ferve to render us circumfpect, and quicken our endeavours to remove the ground of their cenfure. This, even if it do not reconcile them to us, will ftill make us gainers by their enmity; fo that, in any cafe, the Apoftle's interrogation, "And who is he that fhall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" lofes nothing of its force.

Who can forbear to lament, when he fees fuch a litigious fpirit pervade fuperior minds, fuch airy nothings conjured into difficulties, fufficient to clog the wheels of the nobleft undertakings; an effect refulting merely from the partiality with which even wife men fometimes cleave to their own prepoffeffions, added to a reluctance to examine what may poffibly be wrong on their own fide, or right on the other?

It would be comparatively a fmall evil, if prejudices were only foftered on occafions in which religion has no concern. If we could hope to fee fuch a general proficiency in true piety, that, where the fentiments of

men concurred on all essential points, each side would sacrifice something on points that were indifferent, it would be a sort of realization of the communion of Saints. But if it be called an act of Omnipotence to "make men of one mind in a *house*," what would it be to make them of one mind in a town or a kingdom? If we could witness a cordial agreement between those who profess to have the interests of the same religion at heart, such a concurrence in the wish to promote its great practical objects, as would render them willing to concede their own theories, or their own judgment, in things that do not affect any of the vitals of religion, with such noble materials worked up into action, what a glorious world might this become! This combination of Christian feeling would extinguish all unkind debate, "all malice, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking." This peace-offering would oblige no one to renounce his principles; yet, by the extinction of petty differences, by such a confederacy of honest hearts and

candid

candid ſpirits uniting for ſome great public object, this wilderneſs would almoſt be converted into the garden of God. Nor would an inferior portion of the benefit be derived to the minds of thoſe by whom, for a cauſe of general importance, the inconſiderable ſacrifice was made; ſo far from it, it would be hard to ſay which made up the largeſt aggregate of good, the private exerciſe of individual virtue, or the promotion of the general end. But, alas! do we not ſometimes ſee Chriſtians more forward in attacking and expoſing each other, than in buckling on their arms to make war on the common enemy? Are they not more ready to wage that war againſt a pious brother, who does not view ſome one opinion exactly in the ſame light with themſelves, though equally zealous in the promotion of general truth, than againſt thoſe who have no religion at all? What a church triumphant would our's be in one ſenſe, though ſtill militant in another, if there was a union of real Chriſtians joining in one firm band to aſſail the

the ſtrong holds of vice and immorality, inſtead of laying open each other's errors and miſtakes, and thus expoſing the great cauſe itſelf to the deriſion of the unbeliever.

He who is zealouſly running after a favourite opinion, is in danger, in order to eſtabliſh his point, of loſing his moderation by the way, and over-ſtepping truth at the end: and, what is worſe, of converting the ſober defence of his own ſyſtem into a hoſtile attack of that of another; for a hot diſputant ſeldom wages defenſive war. The point under diſcuſſion ſo heats his temper, as to make him loſe ſight of its relative importance. Every conſideration gives way in ſupport of that opinion which has now the predominance in his mind. And this opinion is not ſeldom contended for with an eagerneſs proportioned to its real want of ſolidity: ſince great and important objects are ſeen by their own light, and require not the falſe fire of pride or paſſion to blazon their worth. Often does the hot controverſiſt aſſert that to be of the very eſſence of

of religion, which is but a mere adjunct; and often he seems to wonder how men can bestow so much time and thought on any other topic, while his grand concern is under discussion.

It is because these rooted and unexamined prejudices involve human affairs in so much perplexity, that the rectification of our judgment is one of the most important objects of our concern. The opinion which others entertain of us, though it may hurt our fortune or our fame, yet it cannot injure our more essential interests. Their judgment of us can neither wound our conscience nor shake our integrity. The false judgment we form of *them* may do both, especially if we act upon the opinion we have formed; if we speak injuriously of those of whom we think unkindly; if, by following a blind prejudice or precipitate judgment, we decide upon their characters, without possessing those grounds for determining which we insist are indispensable in the opinion they form of us. Jealousy, resentment, envy, often darken our

 perceptions,

perceptions, and are ſecretly operating on our minds, while we perſuade others, and too probably ourſelves, that we are promoting the intereſts of truth and juſtice, in expoſing the faults, or counteracting the ſchemes of another.

Controverſies will be for ever carried on, though converts are not made; for I do not remember, that of the ancient ſects of philoſophers, any went over to their opponents. Among the profeſſors of the old ſchool divinity, it does not appear that the diſciples ever changed their maſter — that the advocates of the *angelical* Doctor ever adopted the cauſe of the *irrefragable* *; and it appears that the followers of Janſenius and Loyala died with the ſame mutual hoſtility in which they had lived.

As truth, however, will be aſſaulted, it muſt be defended. Controverſial diſcuſſions, therefore, are not only harmleſs, but uſeful, provided truth be the inſpiring motive, and

* Scotus, Aquinas, and the other ſchool divines, were diſtinguiſhed by theſe and ſimilar epithets.

charity

charity the medium of conducting them. Truth is frequently beaten out by conflicting blows, when it might have contracted rust and impurity by lying quiet, uninquired into and unassailed. We are in danger of growing negligent about a truth which is never attacked, or of surrounding it with our own fancies, and appending to it our own excrescencies; while the assailant teaches even the friendly examiner to clear the principle of all foreign mixtures, and, by giving it more purity, to give it wider circulation.

But, as we before observed, a thorough partisan in religion, as well as in politics, seldom takes up a book of controversy with an unbiassed mind. He has a pre-determination which seldom gives way to argument. He does not see, that the supporter of his own cause may be maintaining it in a wrong temper; that, while he is fighting for orthodoxy, he may be aiming his side-blows at a personal antagonist, or giving the death's wound to charity. He does not perceive,

that he may be injuring the interefts of practical religion, while he is labouring to promote fuch as are doctrinal, that he may be inflaming the temper while he is informing the underftanding. For a controverfy is fometimes fo managed, that, though truth may be vindicated, the minds of plain Chriftians may be little informed. Such readers do not underftand the logician's terms, which, though they may have the effect of filencing the opponent, do but little towards enlightening the mind or ftrengthening the faith. Controverfies, therefore, in religion or politics often do little good, in comparifon of the labour they coft, and the evil tempers they excite. They are feldom read by thofe to whom, if temperately conducted, they might be of the moft fervice — the unprejudiced. The perufal is commonly confined to two claffes, friends and enemies. Now the friends and enemies of a writer form but a fmall proportion of the world of readers. Of thefe, the one flies to the book to get his prepoffeffion ftrengthened,

the other, to get his antipathies confirmed. The partizan was pre-determined that no arguments ſhould ſhake him, the adverſary ſat down with the ſame liberal reſolution. Nay, the probability is, that he will declare his former opinion is more immoveably ſettled by the very reaſons the oppoſer has ſuggeſted, ſo that he feels he is furniſhed with freſh arms by the antagoniſt himſelf.

But though neutrality is not a ſtate of mind to be deſired, moderation is. Even theſe polemical Chriſtians, if each would look calmly and kindly on the other, might diſcover in his opponent a ſtriking likeneſs of his own features, if not an entire ſimilarity of complexion; a likeneſs ſufficient to prove that they are both of the ſame family, all children of one common Father, though they do not carry the exact reſemblance in ſome minuteneſſes in which parity is not neceſſary to prove affinity. The general family-likeneſs ſhould, however, operate as an inducement to treat each other with bro-

brotherly kindneſs, even if they were not aſſured, which they all profeſs to be, that the common Father will be the common Judge.

CHAP. XI.

Particular Prejudices.

IT is no inconfiderable part of our duty in our neceffary connections with that motley mafs of characters of which mankind is compofed, to conquer certain prejudices which are too apt to arife, efpecially in perfons of faftidious temper and delicate tafte, againft thofe, who, though effentially valuable in their general character, have fomething about them which is pofitively difagreeable; or who do not fall in with fome of our ideas, or whofe manners are not congenial to our feelings. To wait before we love our fellow-creatures, till their character be perfect, is to wait till we meet in heaven; and not to ferve them till the feeling be reciprocal, is to act on the religion of the publican, and not of the Chriftian. We fhould love people for what we fee in them of the image

image of their Maker, though it be marred and disfigured. That piety which makes them amiable in His ſight, ſhould prevent their being diſguſting in ours. If we conſulted our principles more, and our taſte leſs, it would cure us of this ſharp inqueſt into their infirmities.

Yet, on the other hand, if religious but coarſely-mannered perſons, however ſafe they may be as to their own ſtate, could be aware how much injury their want of delicacy and prudence is doing to the minds of the poliſhed and diſcriminating — perſons, who, though they may admire Chriſtianity in the abſtract, do not love it ſo cordially as to bear with the groſſneſs of ſome of its profeſſors; nor underſtand it ſo intimately, as to diſtinguiſh what is genuine from what is extrinſic — If they could conceive what miſchief they do to religion, by the aſſociations which they teach the refined to combine with it, ſo as to lead them inſeparably to connect piety with vulgarity, they would endeavour to correct their own taſte, from the

the virtuous fear of ſhocking that of others. They ſhould remember, that many a thing is the cauſe of evil which yet is no excuſe for it; that many a truth is brought into diſcredit by the diſagreeableneſs which may be appended to it, and which, though utterly foreign, is made to belong to it.

In addition to the infirmities which, from the fault of nature, or the errors of education, we cannot perhaps ſo eaſily avoid, there are others which are purely voluntary. Certain religioniſts there are who torment themſelves with a chimera till they become the victims of the prejudice of their own creation. There is a querulous ſtrain of pious vanity, in which, with a moſt unamiable egotiſm, they delight to indulge. It is a ſort of traditionary lamentation of evils which, having once been the lot of Chriſtianity in the moſt awful extreme, are aſſumed to be ſtill, in no inconſiderable degree, attached to its followers. Surrounded with all the conveniences of life, and faring comfortably, if not ſumptuouſly, every day, they yet

yet complain of perfecution, as if Chrifti-anity ftill fubjected its followers to the fufferings of thofe primitive difciples, "of whom the world was not worthy." But let them compare the dreadful catalogue of torments enumerated by the Apoftle to the Hebrews — enumerated the more feelingly, as he had experienced in all their extremity the fufferings he defcribes; —let them compare thefe with their own petty trials, of which, the worft they have ever felt or feared, is that "of mockings:" "*cruel* mockings," perhaps, as to the temper of the reviler, but innoxious to the imaginary fufferer. The glorious profeffion of the faints of old brought on them bonds and imprifonments by order of the government. Ours is fanctioned by the ruling powers. "*They* were deftitute, afflicted, tormented;" our diftreffes are feldom caufed by our piety, but frequently by our waht of it. *They* were denied the exercife of their religion, we are protected in ours. *They* were obliged to meet clandeftinely at undue hours in

in incommodious places. With us, provi-ſion is made for public worſhip, and attend-ance on it encouraged and commanded.

Let none of us, then, proudly or peeviſh-ly complain, as if our abundant piety was either forbidden, diſcouraged, or underrated. Private prejudice, and individual hatred, are indeed ſufficiently alive, but the blows they aim fall hurtleſs as the feebly-lifted lance of Priam. If, then, we allow ourſelves to murmur at our own diſadvantages, will it not look as if we inwardly lamented that we are ſo very good to ſo little purpoſe; as if we repined at not being rewarded by uni-verſal applauſe for the ſuperabundance of our piety? May we not, by our complaints, lead the world to ſuſpect that our goodneſs was practiſed as a bait for that applauſe, and that, having miſſed it, we feel as if we had laboured in vain?

But, from the prejudices which one claſs of Chriſtians are too ready to indulge againſt another, we turn to thoſe of a different character; to the philoſophical man of the world,

world, who is pre-poſſeſſed not ſo much againſt any particular claſs of Chriſtians, as againſt Chriſtianity itſelf. Theſe unhappy prejudices are often laid in by an education in which no one thing has been neglected except religion. The intellect has been enlarged by the grandeur, and poliſhed by the ſplendour, of Pagan literature, which took early poſſeſſion of the yet vacant mind, and ſtill maintains its aſcendancy with that power and energy which naturally belong to firſt and, therefore, deep impreſſions. The ſubſequent character continues to feel the effect of the exceſſive admiration early excited by ſome favourite authors, by whom the more impetuous paſſions and generous vices are exalted into virtues, while the ſpurious virtues are elevated into perfections little ſhort of divine, and the whole adorned with whatever can captivate the fancy and enchant the taſte; with beautiful imagery, ingenious fiction, and noble poetry. Who, indeed, does not feel divided between admiration at their writings, and regret that the writers

were

were not providentially favoured with divine illumination? Their brightneſs, like that of ebony, is a fine poliſh on a dark ſubſtance.

Here the indignant man of letters, if any ſuch ſhould condeſcend to caſt an eye on theſe pages, will exclaim, Are ſcholars, then, neceſſarily irreligious? God forbid! far from me be ſuch a vulgar inſinuation — far from me ſuch a prepoſterous charge; not only againſt a multitude of eminent lay-Chriſtians, but againſt the whole of that large and venerable body, whoſe life and labours are dedicated to religion, all of whom are, or ought to be, learned.

But it is nevertheleſs true, reaſon on it as we may, that, in the ſtate of excitement above deſcribed, every youth of taſte and ſpirit, who has not been early grounded in Chriſtian principles, muſt neceſſarily afterwards firſt open the volume of Inſpiration, and find it deſtitute of all that falſe but dazzling luſtre with which the page of ancient learning is decorated.

And

And what muſt conſiderably add to the prejudice which may reaſonably be expected to be thus excited, is, that they find the great object of one religion has been to pull down all the trophies of falſe glory which the other had ſo ſucceſsfully reared. The dignity of human nature, of which they have read and felt ſo much, is laid proſtrate in the duſt. Man is ſtripped of his uſurped attributes, robbed of his independent grandeur. A new ſyſtem, of what appear to him mean-ſpirited and ſneaking virtues—charity, ſimplicity, devotion, forbearance, humility, ſelf-denial, forgiveneſs of injuries—is ſet up in direct oppoſition to thoſe more oſtenſible qualities which are ſo much more flattering to the natural human heart.

Theſe obſtacles to religious progreſs are removed, when, in early inſtitution, the defective principles of the one ſchool are not only pointed out and guarded againſt, but are even, as is frequently the caſe, converted into ſalutary leſſons, by being placed in juſt contraſt with the other, and are made at

once

once to vindicate the ſcheme, and to exalt the principles of Chriſtianity.

But he into whoſe character theſe principles have not been infuſed, is too likely to ſet up on the ſtock of his own underived powers. The cardinal vice of an irreligious reaſoner will naturally be that pride which ſets him on conſidering the Goſpel as a narrower of human underſtanding, a debaſer of the ſoaring ſpirit of intellectual man, a fetter on the expatiating fancy, a clog on the aſpiring mind. This opinion, which he rather adopts by hearſay or tradition than by ſtudying the ſacred volume, continues to keep him ignorant of its contents. He is ſatisfied with knowing Chriſtianity only in the ſtate in which it is preſented to him in certain paſſages, torn from their proper poſition, disjoined with malignant ingenuity, and diſtorted by perverted comment, from that connection which would have ſolved every difficulty and annihilated the triumphant cavil. Or if, under this influence, he take a ſuperficial glance at Chriſtianity, he

 ſees

ſees a religion which, though it prohibits no legitimate greatneſs, yet a religion whoſe object is not to make man, according to the eſtimation of this world, great. His ſecret prejudices, too, may be augmented by the revolting doctrine, that he is not able to do any thing right of himſelf. He is to do the work, and to give the glory to another. After having followed with rapture the conqueror of Carthage hanging up his victorious laurels in the Capitol, he will feel indignant to be taught, that the Chriſtian conqueror, inſtead of glorying in his triumphant crown, "caſts it before the throne."

He had obſerved in Pagan lore, abſtract truth prepared for the philoſoper, pageants, feaſts, and ceremonies for the people. This diſtinction of rank and intellect flattered human pride. In Chriſtianity he finds one rule, and that a plain rule; one faith, and that a humbling faith; one ſcheme of duties, irreſpective of ſtation or talents: while, in the other, the ſyſtems of the learned, and the ſuperſtitions of the vulgar, were as diſ-

tinct

tinct as any two religions, and as inefficacious as none.

But, after all, it is not the idolatry exhibited in the Greek and Roman writers that perhaps can overthrow his faith, though their licentiousness may affect his morals. The hardest blow to his principles will be given by the modern champions of unbelief; by writers against whom the young are not on their guard, because, without Christianity, they slide in under the general title of Christians, disseminating contraband wares under false colours. The wound inflicted by the baptized infidel is more profound than that of the polytheist, whose absurdities render his aim comparatively innoxious. The preposterous systems of a false religion are harmless, compared with objections raised, misrepresentations sent forth, and sarcasms insinuated against the true one.

But if the enthusiastic votary of those systems go no farther than to establish philosophy as his standard, and taste as his guide; when he is brought to think, not

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that philoſophy and taſte are to be abandoned, for Chriſtianity requires no ſuch ſacrifice, but that they are to be admired ſubordinately, the misfortune is, that the ſecond half of life is ſometimes ſpent in imperfectly counteracting the principles imbibed in the firſt half. It is not eaſy to get rid of the pre-poſſeſſion in favour of a morality untinctured with religion; of "that love of fame which the pure ſpirit doth raiſe," but which it is the office of the renewed ſpirit to lower — of the admiration exhauſted on ſplendid, but vicious characters — of the idolatry cheriſhed for unprincipled heroes — of the partiality felt for all the powerful rivals which genius has raiſed up to religion — of all the ſins that poetry has canonized — all the ſophiſtry that praiſe has ſanctified — all the pernicious elegancies of the gay — all the hollow reaſonings of the grave.

In this ſtate of neutrality between religion and unbelief, happy is it for the faultering novice if he be not fatally offended, that

that Chriſtianity admits people who are not elegant-minded, who are not intellectual, to the ſame preſent advantages, to the ſame future hope, with the profound thinker, and logical reaſoner. And, even after the moſt ſucceſsful ſtruggles in this new ſcience, it will ſtill be found, and the diſcovery is humiliating, that the religious attainments of the unlearned are often more rapid, becauſe leſs obſtructed, than thoſe of "the wiſe and the diſputer of this world;" for if the endowments of the unlearned are ſmaller, they are all carried to one point. They have no other purſuit to divide or divert their attention; they have fewer illuſions of of the imagination to repel; they bring no oppoſing ſyſtem to the Chriſtian ſcheme; they bring no prejudices againſt a revelation which holds out a promiſe of reverſionary happineſs to thoſe who are deſtitute of preſent enjoyments; and Chriſtianity will generally be more eaſily believed by thoſe whoſe more immediate intereſt it is to think it true. They have no interfering projects to

to perplex them; no contradictory knowledge to unlearn; their uninfluenced minds are open to impreſſions, and good impreſſions are preſented to them. They have leſs pride to ſubdue, and no pre-poſſeſſions to extinguiſh. They have no compromiſe to make with Chriſtianity, no images of deities, which the philoſopher, like the Emperor Tiberius, wiſhes to ſet up in the ſame temple with Chriſt; no adverſe tenets which they wiſh to incorporate with his religion; no ambition to make it a better thing than they find it. We have ſeen how much philoſophy early impeded the reception of pure Chriſtianity in ſome of the wiſeſt and moſt virtuous pagan converts. Origen and Tertullian did not receive the truth from heaven with the ſame ſimplicity as the fiſhermen of Galilee.

To prove that this is no flight of enthuſiaſtic fancy, let us recollect with what an extraordinary elevation and expanſion of ſoul the Author of our religion bore his divine teſtimony to this truth: "I thank Thee,

Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, becaufe Thou haft hid thefe things from the wife and prudent, and haft revealed them unto babes." He then, inftead of accounting for it by natural means, refolves the myftery into the good pleafure of God— "*Even fo Father, for fo it feemed good in thy fight.*"

Even the vulgarity which, as we have already obferved, mixes with, and debafes the religion of the man of inferior attainments; the incorrect language in which he expreffes his feelings and fentiments; the coarfe images and mean affociations which eclipfe the divine light, do not extinguifh it: they rather, in fome meafure, prove its intrinfic brightnefs by its fhining through fo denfe a medium. When the man of refinement fees, as he cannot but fee, what amelioration Chriftianity confers on the character of the uneducated; how it improves his habits, raifes his language; what a change it effects in his practice, what a degree of illumination it gives to his dark underftanding, what confolation it conveys to

to his heart; how it lightens the burdens of his condition, and cheers the ſorrows of his life — he will, if he be candid, acknowledge, that there muſt needs be a powerful efficacy in that religion which can do more for the ignorant and illiterate, than philoſophy has ever done for the great and the learned. And is it not an unanſwerable evidence of Chriſtianity and the power of grace, when we ſee men far ſurpaſſing all others in every kind of knowledge, themſelves ſo far ſurpaſſed in religious knowledge by perſons abſolutely deſtitute of all other.

But if theſe weak and humble diſciples afford a convincing evidence of the truth of Chriſtianity; if theſe low recipients exhibit a ſtriking exemplification of its excellence, yet we muſt confeſs they cannot exhibit an equally ſublime idea of Chriſtian perfection, they cannot adduce the ſame evidences in its vindication, they cannot adorn its doctrines with the ſame powerful arguments as highly educated Chriſtians. Habituated to inquiry and reflection, theſe are capable of forming more juſt views of the character and attri-

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butes of God, more enlarged conceptions of his moral government. They have alfo the advantage of drawing on their fecular funds to augment their fpiritual riches. They are converfant with authors contemporary with the infpired writers. Acquaintance with ancient manners and oriental ufages alfo gives great advantage to the lettered readers of Scripture, and, by enabling them to throw new light on paffages which time had rendered obfcure, adds frefh ftrength, and double confirmation, to a faith which was before "barred up with ribs of iron." *

Scrip-

* The paltry cavil on the impoffibility that the penitent woman could anoint the feet of Jefus as he fat at meat, could only miflead fuch readers as were unacquainted with the recumbent pofture in which the ancients took their meals. The triumphant fneer at the paralytic, who was let down from the houfetop through the tiling with his couch, could only fhake the faith of thofe who are ignorant of the manner in which the houfes of eaftern countries were roofed.—Whether infidel writers took advantage of the fup-

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Scripture alſo affords a larger range of contemplation to thoſe enlightened minds who ſtudy human nature at the ſame time, or who have previouſly ſtudied it; becauſe it was upon his knowledge of the human character that the Saviour of the world ſo ſtrikingly accommodated his religion to the wants and the relief of that being for whoſe ſalvation it was intended.

The better educated, alſo, will better diſcern, becauſe it demands a higher exerciſe of the rational powers, that paſſages of a ſimilar ſound have not ſeldom a diſſimilar meaning; and that it is not the words, but the ideas, which conſtitute the reſemblance. The want of this diſcernment has led many well diſpoſed, but ill informed perſons, into miſtakes.

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poſed ignorance of their readers, or whether their ridicule of theſe imputed abſurdities of Scripture aroſe from their own ignorance, we will not determine. Inſtances might be multiplied without number f this ignorance, or of this diſingenuouſneſs.

Again:

Again: — Many detached texts are meant as a brief ſtatement of a general truth, and intended to lead the reader into ſuch ſtrains of reflection as ſhall "exerciſe unto Godlineſs," inſtead of exhibiting a full delineation and giving the whole face and figure, every ſide and aſpect of the ſubject. Scripture frequently propoſes ſome important topic in a popular manner, without making out its full deductions, or its ſeries of conſequences. Now, for the fuller underſtanding theſe heads, and turning them to their due improvement, the advantage lies entirely on the ſide of the thinking and the reaſoning reader. It muſt be confeſſed, however, that the humble, though illiterate Chriſtian, is able to attain all the practical benefits of theſe ſuggeſtions. He compares Scripture with Scripture, he ſubſtitutes no opinions of his own for thoſe he there meets with, he never attempts to improve upon Chriſtianity, he never wiſhes to make the Bible a better thing than he finds it. By diligent application, and ſerious prayer, his underſtanding

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enlarges with his piety. Above all, he does the "will of God;" and, therefore, "knows of the doctrine that it is of God."

It muſt be confeſſed alſo, on the other hand, that the profeſſed ſcholar, by converting Scripture-learning into theſes of diſcuſſion, is in ſome danger of making his knowledge more critical than practical. The ſame reaſon which is meant to enlighten, may be employed to explain away this faith; and his learning which adorns, is capable alſo of being turned to diſcredit it.

We muſt, however, admit, that when our ſuppoſed man of education becomes eſſentially pious, his piety will be of a higher ſtrain. It is more pure, more perfect, more exempt from erroneous mixtures, more clear of debaſing aſſociations, more entirely free from diſguſting cant and offenſive phraſeology; leſs likely to run into imprudence, error, and exceſs; leſs in danger of the gloomineſs of ſuperſtition on one hand, and the wildneſs of fanaticiſm on the other. Having the uſe of a better judgment in the

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choice, he is not in the ſame danger of being miſled by ignorant inſtructors; he is not liable to be drawn away by a vanity ſo difficult to reſtrain in the uneducated religious man; a vanity ſo frequently excited when he ſees his own ſuperiority, in this great point, to his worſe informed neighbours. From this vanity and this want of the reſtraint of that modeſty impoſed by ſuperior education, the man of low condition often appears more religious than he is, becauſe, being diſpoſed to be proud of his piety, he is forward to talk of it. While the higher bred frequently appear leſs pious than they really are, from the good taſte and delicacy which commonly accompany a cultivated mind. There is alſo another reaſon why they exhibit it leſs, they are aware that, in their own ſociety, the exhibition would bring them no great credit.

If unlettered Chriſtians labour under ſome diſadvantages, they yet afford an internal evidence of the truth of Chriſtianity, and an evidence of no ſmall value. They ſhew that it is the ſame principle which,

when rightly received, pervades alike all hearts; a principle which makes its direct way to underſtandings impervious to the ſhafts of wit, and inſenſible to the deductions of reaſoning — to minds ſunk in low purſuits, indurated by vulgar habits. It is a proof of its being the ſame principle, that ſuch ſeemingly diſqualified perſons poſſeſs as clear views of its nature, at leaſt of its broad and ſaving truths, as the man of genius and the ſcholar; deſtitute as they are of all his advantages, wanting perhaps his natural perſpicacity, unuſed to his habits of enquiry, incapable of thoſe trains of reflection which he brings from his other ſubjects to the inveſtigation of this. No one, if he examine impartially, can fail to be ſtruck with this grand characteriſtic of the truth of Chriſtianity — not only, that in all degrees of capacity and education in the ſame country, but that in different countries, in thoſe where taſte and learning are carried to the higheſt perfection, and in dark and ignorant nations, where not only the ſun of ſcience

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has never dawned, but where no glimpſe of religion can be caught by a reflex light, as is the caſe in poliſhed and Chriſtian countries,—wherever Chriſtianity has made its way, and pierced through the native obſcurity, there the genuine ſpirit, and the great eſſential fruits of the Goſpel, will be found juſt the ſame; the ſame impreſſion is made by the ſame principle; the ſame reſults ſpring from the ſame cauſe, and the diſciples of Chriſt, whether it be the converted Greenlander or the Academical believer, are recognized in all their diſtinguiſhing features, are identified in all the leading points. Such a concurrence in ſentiment, feeling and practice, ſuch a union in faith hope and charity, amongſt perſons diſſimilar in all other reſpects, unlike in all other qualities, unequal in all other requiſites; minds never made to be akin by nature thus allied by grace, bearing the ſame ſtamp of reſemblance in ſpirit as their poſſeſſors bear in the common properties of body:—all this is a convincing proof that there muſt be

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ſomething divine in a principle which can aſſimilate ſuch contrarieties — which can re-unite thoſe in one common centre who differ in all other reſpects — which can annihilate all diſtinctions to produce identity in the leading point. Does not all this prove it indeed to be the work of God, a work which requires not previous accompliſhments or preparatory reſearch, but only a willing mind, an unprejudiced ſpirit, and an humble heart? Does it not prove, that where the eſſence, and the power, and the ſpirit of Chriſtianity really reſide, it will produce the one grand effect, *a new heart and a new life?*

CHAP. XII.

Farther Cauſes of Prejudice.

IT is a ſingular fact that the infidel and the fanatic ſometimes meet at the ſame point of error — that reaſon has little to do with religion. The enthuſiaſt we are hopeleſs of convincing by argument, becauſe he is commonly ignorant; but the lettered ſceptic may be better taught even by his pagan maſters. Plutarch, after a large diſcuſſion whether brutes had any reaſon, determines in the negative from this conſideration, *becauſe they had no knowledge or feeling of a Deity.* The great Roman orator expreſſes the ſame idea when he aſſerts, *that a capacity for religion was the diſtinguiſhing mark of rationality,* and *affirms that this capacity is the moſt unequivocal ſign of reaſon.*

Yet ſound reaſon and Chriſtian piety are ſometimes repreſented as if they were bel-

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ligerent powers, and as if *Orders in Council* had been iſſued to cut off all commerce between them; as if they were better calculated eternally to meet ſword in hand, than in the conciliatory way of treaty and negotiation; as if every victory of the one, muſt neceſſarily be obtained at the expence of the other's defeat. But is it not an affront to the Giver of every good gift to repreſent his higheſt natural and his ſupernatural endowments as infallibly hoſtile to each other? It is evident that when reaſon and religion act in concert, they ſtrengthen each other's hands. But when they injudiciouſly act in oppoſition, perverted reaſon ſtarves the ardour of piety, or ill-judging piety hands over reaſon to obliquy and ſcorn. In every caſe, the ill-underſtood jealouſy of each injures the intereſts of both.

But the truth is, ſound and ſober Chriſtianity is ſo far from diſcountenancing the uſe of reaſon, that ſhe invites its co-operation, knowing that it poſſeſſes powerful arms to defend her cauſe; to defend her againſt the

the encroachments of error, the abſurdities of fanaticiſm, the inroads of ſuperſtition, the aſſaults of infidelity. But while ſhe treats it not as a rival but an ally, Chriſtianity, ſtrong in Almighty ſtrength, maintains her own imperial power uninfringed. While ſhe courts the friendſhip of her confederate, ſhe allows not her own uncontrolled ſuperiority to be uſurped. She aſſigns to reaſon its ſpecific office, and makes it know and keep its proper limits. The old law, indeed, being a formula of ceremonies, and a digeſt of ordinances for one particular people, left not ſo full an exerciſe for the uſe of reaſon. Deſcending to the moſt minute particulars, and being expanded into the moſt detailed directions, it left little for the diſciple but to read the rule and follow it. But the New Teſtament being, as we have elſewhere obſerved, rather a ſyſtem of principles, than a mere didactic table of ſmall as well as great duties, leaves much more to the exerciſe of reaſon, and furniſhes a much larger field for the under-

underſtanding to develop, to compare, to ſeparate, to combine. The whole plan of duty is, indeed, moſt clearly and diſtinctly laid open; but every uniting particle, every intermediate ſtep, every concatenating link, is not traced out with amplitude and fullneſs.

The more inſtructed Chriſtian will perceive that ſome expreſſions are merely figurative; ſome are directions for perſons under one circumſtance, and ſome for thoſe under another. The Goſpel requires, indeed, as implicit ſubmiſſion from the Chriſtian, as the law required from the Jew; but while it propoſes truths, all of which equally demand his obedience, ſome of them require more eſpecially the uſe of his reflection, and the exerciſe of his ſagacity. We allude not to the great "myſteries of godlineſs," but but to duties which are of individual application.

If we were to purſue prejudice through all its infinite variety, we ſhould never have done with the inexhauſtible ſubject. Obſervation

ſervation preſents to us followers of truth of a very different caſt, though their uniform object be the ſame. Theſe perſons, while they ſometimes ſeek her Temple by different paths, are yet oftener kept wide of each other by words than by things. Whatever, indeed, be the ſeparating principle, prejudice is always carried to its *greateſt* height by the impatience of the too fiery on the one hand, and the contempt of the too frigid on the other. But both, as we obſerved, maintain their diſtance more by certain leading terms by which each is fond to be diſcriminated, and by an intolerance in each, to the terms adopted by the other; than by any radical diſtinction which might fairly keep them aſunder. Now we do not wiſh them to relinquiſh the uſe of their peculiar terms, becauſe they either do, or ſhould deſignate to their minds the moſt important characters of religion. The Chriſtian ſhould neither ſhrink from his own ſtrong hold, nor treat with repulſive diſdain him who appears earneſt in his approaches

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towards it, though he has not as yet, through ſome prejudice of education, ſought it in a direct way. There are many terms, ſuch as *faith* and *grace*, and others which might be mentioned, which ſubject the more advanced Chriſtian to the imputation of enthuſiaſm and the charge of cant. Theſe, however, are words which are the ſigns of things on which his eternal hopes depend, and he uſes them, even though he may ſometimes do it unſeaſonably, yet not as the Shibboleth of a profeſſion, but becauſe there are no others exactly equivalent to their reſpective meanings. In fact, if he did not uſe them when occaſion calls, he would be deſerting his colours, and be making a compromiſe, to the ruin of his conſcience.

But let him not in return fall too heavily on what are, to his ear, the obnoxious terms of his adverſary. Let him not be ſo forward to conſider the terms *virtue* and *rectitude* as implying hereſies that muſt be hewed down without mercy; as ſubſtantives which muſt never find a place in the Chriſtian's

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tian's Lexicon. They are not only very innocent but very excellent words, if he who utters them only means to exprefs by Virtue thofe good works which are the fruits of a right faith, and by Rectitude that unbending principle of equity and juftice which defignates the confirmed Chriftian. The abufe of thefe terms may, indeed, make the adverfary a little afraid of ufing them, as the unneceffary multiplication of ordinary cafes in which the more fcriptural terms are preffed into the fervice, may make the lefs advanced Chriftian unreafonably fhy of obtruding them.

But why muft we vilify in others what we are cautious of ufing ourfelves in order to magnify what we chufe to adopt? We fhould rather be glad that thofe who fomewhat differ from us, come fo near as they do; that they are more religious than we expected; that if they are in error, they are not in hoftility; or if feemingly averfe, it is more to the too indifcriminate and light ufe of the opponent's terms, than to the fober

ſober reception of the truths they convey. Let us be glad even at the worſt, to ſee oppoſition mitigated, differences brought into a narrower compaſs. Let us not encounter as leaders of hoſtile armies, but try what can be done by negotiation, though never of courſe, by conceſſion in eſſentials. If the terms Virtue and Rectitude are uſed to the excluſion of faith and grace, or as ſubſtitutes for them, it may afford an opening for the pious advocate to ſhew the difference between the principle and its conſequence, the root and its produce. He ſhould charitably remember that it is one thing for an honeſt enquirer to come ſhort of truth, and another for a petulant caviller to wander wide of it. It is one thing to err through miſtake or timidity, and another to offend through wilfulneſs and preſumption. If the enquirer be of the former claſs, only deficient and not malignant, he may be brought to feel his deficiency, and is often in a very improveable ſtate. It would therefore be well to let him ſee that you think him right as far as he

he goes, but that he does not go to the bottom. If he profeffes "to deny all ungodlinefs and worldly lufts," this is no fmall ftep. He may ftill require to be convinced that it is "by the grace of God teaching him." Here the two ideas expreffed by your term of Grace, and his of Virtue, are brought into united action, with this difference, or if you pleafe with this agreement, that your's being the caufe, and his the effect, the Chriftian character attains its confummation between you. You muft, however, endeavour to convince him, that though the greater includes the lefs, the reverfe cannot be true; that faith and grace in the Chriftian fenfe involve virtue and rectitude, but virtue and rectitude in the philofophical fenfe defire to be excufed from any connection with faith and grace. But the offence taken at terms creates hoftility at the outfet, blocks up the avenues to each other's heart, and leads men to be fo filled with the things in which they differ, as to

keep them in the dark as to the things in which they agree.

The more ſtrict diſputant will perhaps continue to inſiſt that no ſuch terms as virtue and rectitude are to be found in any Evangeliſt. Granted.—Neither do we find there ſome other ſolemn words expreſſive of the moſt awful verities of our religion. The holy *Trinity* and the *ſatisfaction* made by the death of Chriſt, are not, I believe, in any part of the New Teſtament expreſſed by theſe terms, which were firſt uſed ſome ages after in the Byzantine church. But can it be ſaid that the things themſelves are not to be found there? They are not only conſpicuous in every part of the Goſpel, but make up the ſum and ſubſtance of what it teaches.

While each diſputant then contends for his own phraſes, let not the one ſuſpect that Grace and Faith are the watch-words of enthuſiaſm; nor the other conclude that infidelity ſkulks behind virtue, and pagan pride behind rectitude. St. Paul expreſsly exhorts

exhorts his converts to "add to their faith virtue," and if the inverted injunction was never given, it was not becauſe faith was unneceſſary where virtue previouſly exiſted, but becauſe virtue, Chriſtian virtue, never could have exiſted at all without previous faith. In enjoining virtue, the Apoſtle, upon his own uniform principle, ſuppoſes the Chriſtian to be already in poſſeſſion of faith; this he ever conſiders the eſſential ſubſtance, virtue the inſeparable appendage. Thus the divine preacher on the Mount, in his prohibition of an hypocritical outſide, does not ſay, Give alms, faſt, pray; he concluded that his followers were already in the practice of thoſe duties, and on this conviction grounded his cautionary exhortation, *when* thou doeſt alms, *when* thou prayeſt, *when* thou faſteſt. He taught them to avoid all oſtentation in duties, to which he alluded as already eſtabliſhed. Be it obſerved — by the Saviour himſelf no attribute is ſo conſtantly enjoined or commanded as faith. His previous queſtion to thoſe who reſorted to him

to be cured, was not if they had *virtue*, but *faith*; but never let it be forgotten, that as ſoon as the cure was performed, the man of faith was enjoined, as the ſureſt evidence of his virtue, *to ſin no more.*

CHAP. XIII.

Humility, the only true Greatneſs.

HUMILITY is one of thoſe qualities of which Chriſtianity requires the perpetual practical exerciſe. It does not inſiſt that we ſhould be conſtantly feeding or inſtructing others — that we ſhould be every moment engaged in acts of benevolence to our fellow-creatures, or of mortification to ourſelves; but, whether we teach or are taught, whether we communicate our good things to others, or are dependant on others for the communication to ourſelves, humility is required as the invariable, the indiſpenſable, the habitual grace, in the life of a Chriſtian. Pride being the radical diſtemper of the natural man; the buſineſs, the duty, the bleſſedneſs of the ſpiritual man, is to be freed from it.

However valuable high intellectual attainments have been found in the vindication of religion, however beneficially talents and learning have been exerted in adducing the evidences and augmenting the illuftrations of divine truth, yet for the moft ftriking exemplification of genuine piety, "To this man will I look, faith the Lord, who is of an humble fpirit." Chriftianity gives a new form to the virtues, by re-cafting them in this mould. Humility may be faid to operate on the human character like the fculptor, who, in chiffeling out the ftatue, accomplifhes his object, not by laying on, but by paring off, not by making extraneous additions, but by retrenching fuperfluities; till every part of the redundant material is cleared away. The reduction which true religion effects, of fwelling paffions, irregular thoughts, and encumbering defires, produces at length on the human mind fome affimilation to the divine image — that model by which it works — as the human re-

femblance

ſemblance is gradually, and at length ſucceſsfully, wrought in the marble.

Chriſtianity, though equally favourable to the loftieſt as to the loweſt condition of life, was not intended to make man great, but to make him contented to be little. Though no enemy to the poſſeſſion and cultivation of the higheſt mental powers, but affording, on the contrary, the nobleſt objects for their inveſtigation, and the richeſt materials for their exerciſe; yet ſhe reſts not her truth on their diſcuſſions, nor depends for making her way to the heart on their reaſonings. While the cheering approbation of an humble faith is an encouragement repeatedly held out in the Goſpel, there is not one commendation of talent, except for its application — not the leaſt notice of rank or riches, except to intimate their danger — not any mention of the wiſdom of this world, except to pronounce its condemnation.

Humility ſtands at the head of the beatitudes, and is incorporated with them all.

 And

And the gracious injunction, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," is a plain intimation, that our Redeemer particularly intended that portion of his own divine character for the most immediate object, not of our admiration only, but of our imitation. It is the temper which of all others he most frequently commends, most uniformly enjoins, and which his own pure and holy life most invariably exhibits. If we look into the Old Testament, we see that God, after having described himself as "the high and holy One which inhabiteth eternity," by a transition the most unexpected, and a condescension the most inconceivable, immediately subjoins, that "He dwelleth with the contrite and the humble;" and this from a motive inexpressibly gracious, "to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Is it not incredible that, after these repeated declarations and examples of the Almighty Father and of the Eternal Son, that pride should still be thought a mark of

greatness

greatneſs, an ebullition of ſpirit; and that humility ſhould be ſo little underſtood to be the true moral dignity of Chriſtians? While in the religion which they profeſs, there is no excellence to which it is not preliminary, and of which it is not the crown; nor are other virtues genuine but as they are accompanied with this grace, and performed in this ſpirit. No quality has acquired its perfection, till it is clarified and refined by being ſteeped in humility.

It is indeed eſſential to the very reception of Chriſtianity, for, without this principle, we ſhall be diſpoſed to cavil at divine revelation, to reject, at leaſt, every truth revolting to human pride; we ſhall require other ground for the belief in God than his revealed word, other evidence of his veracity than the internal conviction of our ſpiritual wants, and the ſuitableneſs of that remedy which the Goſpel preſents to us. This principle, therefore, is indiſpenſable; without it, we ſhall be little inclined cordially to receive Chriſtianity as a light, or to obey it

as a rule. Without it, we ſhall not diſcover the evil of our own hearts; and, without this diſcovery, we ſhall by no means value the grace of the Holy Spirit; we ſhall exerciſe no habitual dependance on the promiſed aſſiſtance, nor ſeek for a ſupport of which we do not feel the want.

But humility, by leading us to form a juſt eſtimate of ourſelves, teaches us to diſcern the narrowneſs of our capacities. It reminds us, that there are many things even in the works of God's natural creation far above our comprehenſion; that from the ignorance and blindneſs of our minds we make frequent miſtakes, and form a very erroneous judgment about things comparatively obvious and intelligible. This temper will bring us to credit with fuller cordiality the teſtimony which God in his word gives of himſelf, and cure us of the vanity of rejecting it, on the mere ground that we cannot comprehend it. It will deliver us from the deſire of being "wiſe above what is written," and is the ſole antidote to the perils of that pro-

promiſe of unhallowed knowledge, with which the grand ſeducer tempted his firſt credulous victims.

It is not till humility has practically made known to us how ſlowly religion produces its effect on ourſelves, that we ceaſe to marvel at its feeble influence and ſlow-paced efficacy on thoſe around us. As a conſequence, this principle leads the humble Chriſtian to be ſevere in judging himſelf, and diſpoſes him to be candid in judging others. When he compares himſelf with worſe men, it furniſhes a motive, not for vanity, but gratitude; when with better, for additional ſelf-abaſement.

St. Paul ſeems to have been fully aware of the lagging movement which even Chriſtians make towards the compleat attainment of this heavenly temper. In his addreſs to the Coloſſians, after having expreſſed his firm hope of their ſincere converſion, in that they had "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him," he yet finds it ex-

pedient to exhort them; and, for this very reafon, "to put on," together with other Chriftian qualities which he enumerates, "humblenefs of mind."

He might have preffed this duty under the fuppofition of two cafes, and, in either, the injunction would be juft. As they had made a public profeffion of Chriftianity, he intimates, that there was no furer way of evincing that their profeffion was fincere, and their converfion radical, than by this unequivocal mark, the cultivation of an humble fpirit. Or, on the other hand, however deeply rooted they might be in faith and piety, he might feel it neceffary to remind them, that they fhould not confider themfelves as having attained a perfection which left no room for improvement. So far was this deep proficient in divine wifdom from thinking that all was done when the convert had entered on his new courfe, he enjoins them, even after this effectual change, that they fhould, as a confequence as well as a proof, *therefore* "put on" this Chriftian grace; and

and produces their converſion as a motive, "*becauſe* you are already renewed." He does not recommend any ſpecific act, ſo much as a general diſpoſition of "mind," implying, according to his uniform practice, that growth was neceſſary to life, and progreſs to perfection.

The doctrines of Chriſtianity, and the diſcourſes of its divine Author, are rather pointed againſt certain radical evil principles, than extended to their leſſer ramifications. When the powerful artillery of the Goſpel was more eſpecially levelled againſt the ſtrong holds of pride, it included in the attack all the minor offences reſulting from it; implying, that if the citadel be conquered, the intimidated forces in the outworks will make but a feeble reſiſtance.

Even the worldly and the careleſs, who are perhaps too inattentive to perceive that humility is the predominating feature in the truly religious character, as well as the moſt amiable and engaging part of it, yet pay it a ſort of involuntary homage in adopting

its outward appearance. Many among the more elegant claſſes of ſociety, who cannot be brought to adopt the principle, aſſume the form, as the moſt unequivocal mark of their ſuperior condition. But while the well-bred exhibit the poliſhed exterior of humility in *manner*, they are called, as Chriſtians, to cultivate the inward and ſpiritual grace. In ſpite of the laws againſt egotiſm which the code of good breeding has iſſued, a nearer intimacy ſometimes diſcloſes the ſelf-ſatisfaction which politeneſs had thinly veiled. While we are prone to carry our virtues in our memory, we cannot be always on our guard againſt producing them in our converſation. If they are not the fruit of ſelf-inquiry and habitual diſcipline, they will be ſuperficial, and things on the ſurface, we know, are ſoon diſcovered. Such virtues, for the moſt part popular ones, caught our taſte perhaps from the applauſe with which they were received, or the eloquence with which they were ſet forth in our preſence: and as we acquired them

in public, and by hearing and reading, we ſhall be contented to exerciſe them in profeſſion and talk. Many, and very many of theſe qualities, may be grafted on the old ſtock, and look green and flouriſhing, whilſt they "have no root in themſelves;" but genuine humility ſprings out of a root deeply fixed in the ſoil of a renewed heart, and takes its firſt ground on the full conviction of our apoſtacy from God.

As we make a proficiency in this humbling knowledge of ourſelves, our confidence in our own virtues proportionally diminiſhes. The delight we once received in the contemplation is firſt abated by ſelf-diſtruſt, and finally aboliſhed by ſelf-acquaintance. Then we begin to profit by the deep ſenſe of our own weakneſs, and to ſend forth the genuine fruits of a ſtrength and a virtue derived from higher ſources. And thus, the ſound conviction of our own frailty, though purchaſed at the expence of a great error, may prove, if we might venture to ſay it, of more real benefit to our own

own mind, than the performance of a ſplendid action, if of that action all the uſe we had made had been to repoſe added confidence in our own ſtrength, or to entertain higher notions of our own goodneſs.

Yet, while we ought to be deeply humbled at every freſh detection of evil in our hearts, to be diſcouraged at the diſcovery from proceeding in our Chriſtian courſe is ſo far from being an effect of humility, that it is rather the reſult of pride. The traveller who meets with a fall, does not recover his ground by lying ſtill and lamenting, but by riſing and purſuing his journey. Joined with this faulty deſpondency, or ſtill more frequently preceding it, is to be traced the operation of a blind and morbid pride. Particularly, if the intimation of the fault we have committed comes from others, the heart is found to riſe at the bare ſuggeſtion that we are not perfect. We had perhaps been guilty of a hundred faults before, of which, as others took no notice, they made little impreſſion on ourſelves. We commit

a ſmaller

a ſmaller error, which draws the eyes of the world upon us, and we are not only dejected but almoſt hopeleſs. The eye of God was equally witneſs to our preceding faults, yet from their being ſecret, they produced little compunction, while that which is obvious to human inſpection produces ſorrow on the mere ground of producing ſhame. Perhaps we were permitted to fall into this more notorious error that we might be brought to advert to thoſe of which we had been ſo little ſenſible; and though the depreſſion conſequent upon this fault is rather the conſciouſneſs of mortified pride, than of pious contrition, yet God may make uſe of it to awaken us to a feeling of our general corruptions, to warn us not to depend on ourſelves, and to put us on our guard againſt "ſecret faults," as well as againſt open and "preſumptuous ſins."

Even a good man is not entirely exempt from the danger of occaſional elation of ſpirit; even a good man does not always judge himſelf ſo rigorouſly as he ought; yet,

yet, though he makes too many partial allowances, is too much difpofed to foftenings and abatements, to apologies and deductions, ftill he is, on the whole, fufpicious of himfelf, diftruftful of his own rectitude, on his guard againft habitual aberrations from humility. Though tremblingly alive to kindnefs, his fincerity makes him almoft ready to regret commendation, becaufe his enlightened confcience tells him, that if the panegyrift knew him as he knows himfelf, it would have been beftowed with much abatement; and he is little elated with the praife which is produced by ignorance and miftake. Though he has fewer faults than fome others, yet, as he muft know more of himfelf than he can know of them, his humility will teach him to bear patiently even the cenfure he does not deferve, confcious how much he does deferve for faults which the cenfurer cannot know.

There is, however, no humility in an exceffive depreciation of ourfelves. We are not commanded to take a falfe eftimate of

our

our own character, though a low would be too frequently a juſt one. While the great Apoſtle St. Peter was contented to call himſelf *the ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt*, his ſelf-conſtituted ſucceſſors, by an hyperbole of ſelf-abaſement, have denominated themſelves *ſervants of the ſervants of God.* And yet they have not, it is to be feared, *always* ſurpaſſed the diſciple they profeſs to follow, in the diſplay of this apoſtolic grace.

Nor is the appearance of this quality any infallible proof of its exiſtence. Nothing is more common than to hear affability to the poor produced as an undoubted evidence of the humility of the affluent. The act, indeed, is always amiable, whatever be the motive; but ſtill the expreſſion is equivocal. Does it not ſometimes too much reſemble that ſeptennial exhibition of humility which calls forth ſo much ſmiling condeſcenſion from the powerful, while it conveys "an hour's importance to the poor man's heart?" The one enjoys the brief, but keen delight, of reviling his ſuperiors with

with impunity, with the better gratification of conferring favours inſtead of receiving them; the other, like Dryden's Achitophel, "bowing popularly low," wins, by his courteſy, that favour, which he would not perhaps have obtained by his merit. But the curtain ſoon cloſes on the perſonated ſcene: — the next day, both fall back into their natural character and condition. The periodical condeſcenſion at once reinſtates itſelf into its ſeven years' dignity, while the *independent elector* cheerfully reſumes his place in his *dependent* claſs, till the next Saturnalia again invite to the reciprocal exchange of character.

Where the difference of condition is obviouſly great, nothing is loſt, and ſomething may be gained by familiarity; the condeſcenſion is ſo apparent, that though it properly excites both admiration and gratitude in the indigent, it does not infallibly prove the lowlineſs of the ſuperior. The impaſſable gulf which ſeparates the two conditions, the immoveable fences which eſtabliſh that diſtance, preſerve the

poor

poor from encroachment, and the rich from derogation: no ſwellings of heart ariſe againſt the acknowledged dependant, no dread of emulation againſt the avowed inferior. Even arrogance itſelf is gratified at ſeeing its train augmented by ſo amiable a thing as its own kindneſs. Notice is richly repaid by praiſe, and condeſcenſion finds it has only ſtooped to riſe. The diſcreetly proud are aware, that arrogant manners bar up men's hearts againſt them; their very pride, therefore, preſerves them from inſolence, the determined object being to gain hearts, and their good ſenſe telling them that a haughty demeanour is not the way to gain them, they know how to make the exterior affable in proportion as the mind is high; for the ingenuity of pride has taught it, that popularity is only to be obtained by concealing the moſt offenſive part of itſelf. Thus it can retain its nature and gratify its ſpirit, without the arrogant diſplay by which vulgar pride diſguſts, and, by diſguſting, loſes its aim.

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The true teſt is, how the ſame perſon feels, and how he conducts himſelf towards him whoſe claims come in competition with his own — who treads on his heels in his pretenſions, or ſurpaſſes him in his ſucceſs — who is held up as his rival in genius, in reputation, in fortune, in diſplay — who runs the race with him and outſtrips him. More ſevere will be the teſt, when the competitor is "his own familiar friend," who was his equal, perhaps his inferior, in the conteſt for academical honours, but is now a more fortunate candidate for the prizes which the world diſtributes, or his decided conqueror on the profeſſional Arena.

His humility is put to the trial, when he hears another extolled for the very quality on which he moſt values himſelf — commended for ſomething in which he would, if he dared, monopolize commendation — it is tried when he ſees that a man of merit has proſpered in an enterprize in which *he* has failed, or when he is called upon for the magnanimity to acknowledge one who is below

below him in general character, ſtill his ſuperior in this particular reſpect — it is, when, in ſome individual inſtance, this competitor has promoted the public good by a means which *he* had declared to be totally inapplicable to the end.

The true Chriſtian will be humble in proportion to the ſplendour of his endowments. Humility does not require him to ſtupify or diſavow his underſtanding, and thus diſqualify or indiſpoſe him for great active duties. If he poſſeſſes talents he is not unconſcious of them, but, inſtead of exulting in the poſſeſſion, he is abaſed that he has not turned them to better account, he is habitually thinking how he can moſt eſſentially ſerve God with his own gift. Senſible that he owes every thing to his divine Benefactor, he feels that he has not made him the return to which he was bound, and that his gratitude bears little proportion to his mercies; ſo that the very review of his abilities and poſſeſſions, which inflates the hearts of others, only deepens his humility, only fills

fills his mind with a fuller ſenſe of his own defect of love and thankfulneſs. Every diſtinction, inſtead of intoxicating him, only augments his ſenſe of dependence, magnifies his weight of obligation, encreaſes his feeling of accountableneſs. His humility has a double excitement:—he receives every bleſsing as the gift of God through the merits of his Son; it is encreaſed by the reflection, that ſuch is his unworthineſs, he dares not even ſupplicate the mercy of his Creator but through the interceſſion of a Mediator: "Where is boaſting then? it is excluded." Not only on account of any good he may have, but alſo on account of evils from which he has been preſerved, he acknowledges himſelf indebted to divine aſſiſtance; ſo that his eſcapes and deliverances, as well as his virtues, are ſubjects of gratitude rather than of ſelf-exaltation.

It will not be departing from the preſent object, if we contraſt the quality under conſideration with its oppoſite. While humility is never at variance with itſelf, pride is

a very inconſiſtent principle. It knows not only how to aſſume the garb of the attribute to which it is oppoſed, but even deſcends to be abject, which humility never is. Conſider it on one ſide, nothing is ſo ſelf-ſupported; ſurvey it on the other, you will perceive that nothing is ſo dependent, ſo full of claims, ſo exacting, ſo incapable of ſubſiſting on itſelf. It is made up of extrinſic appendages; it leads a life of mendicity; it ſtoops to beg the alms of other men's good opinion for its daily bread. It is true, the happineſs of a proud man, if he have rank, ariſes from an idea of his own importance; but ſtill, to feed and maintain this greedy ſelf-importance, he muſt look around him. His pleaſures are derived, not ſo much from his perſonal enjoyments, as from his ſuperiority to others; not ſo much from what he poſſeſſes, as from the reſpect his poſſeſſions inſpire. As he cannot entirely ſupport his feelings of greatneſs by what he finds in himſelf, he ſupplies the deficiency by looking backward to his anceſtors, and

downward upon his train. With all his ſelf-conſequence, he is reduced to borrow his dignity from the merits of the one, and the numbers of the other. By thus multiplying himſelf, he feels not only individually, but numerically, great. Theſe foreign aids and adjuncts help him to enlarge the ſpace he fills in his own imagination, and he is meanly contented to be admired for what is, in effect, no part of himſelf. This ſentiment is, however, by no means limited to rank or riches.

If the penury of pride drives it to ſeek its aliment in the praiſe of others, it is chiefly becauſe we want their good opinion to confirm us in that which we have of ourſelves. When we ſecretly indulge in reckoning up the teſtimonies we have collected to our worth, it is becauſe we like to bring as many witneſſes as we can muſter, that we may have their approving verdict in additional proof that our own judgment was right. In fact, we think better of ourſelves in proportion as we contrive to make more

people think well of us. But, however large the circle which "high imaginations" draw round the individual ſelf in the centre, it is a ſhort, but not unjuſt, reflection, with which we diſmiſs the ſubject of this fantaſtical principle, that we can really occupy no more than our allotted ſpace; we may indeed change our poſition, but, in ſhifting it, we fill no more than we filled already, for by the removal we loſe as much as we gain.

It is an humbling truth, that the moſt powerful talents are not ſeldom accompanied with vehement paſſions, that a brilliant imagination is too frequently aſſociated with ungoverned appetites. Neither natural reaſon, nor motives merely moral, are commonly found to keep theſe impetuous uſurpers in order; the ſtrength of men's paſſions tempting them to violate the rules which the ſtrength of their judgment has laid down. What is natural in the intellect, will not, of itſelf, govern what is natural in the appetite. If the lower part of our nature is ſubdued,

it is not without the holy ſpirit aſſiſting the higher. Wit, eſpecially, has ſuch a tendency to lead aſtray the mind which it embelliſhes, that it is a ſtriking evidence of the efficacy of grace, when men, whoſe ſhining talents make virtue lovely in the eyes of others, reject themſelves "high thoughts engendering pride;" when they, on whoſe lips the attention of others hangs with delight, can, themſelves, by this divinely infuſed principle, "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Chriſt."

There is no quality ſo ready to ſuſpect, and ſo prompt to accuſe, as that which we are conſidering; there is no fault which a proud man ſo readily charges upon others as pride; eſpecially if the perſon accuſed poſſeſs thoſe diſtinctions and accompliſhments, the poſſeſſion of which would make the accuſer proud. Men full of themſelves, are diſpoſed to fancy others deficient in attention to them; and as it never occurs to them why thoſe attentions are withheld, they have no other way of accounting for

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the neglect, but to charge the neglecter with being envious of his qualities, or vain of his own.

The proud man, by not cordially falling in with the Chriftian fcheme — which, if he thoroughly adopted, would fhrink to nothing thefe bloated fancies — contracts, in effect, the duration of his exiftence, and reduces to almoft nothing the fphere in which his boafted dignity is to be exercifed. The theatre on which he is fatisfied to act, is limited to the narrow ftage of this world; and even on this vanifhing fcene how far are the generality from being confiderable actors! Pride, therefore, is fomething worfe than fatuity, for whether the ftake be high or low, it is fure to play a lofing game. It is difficult to fay which lot will be moft terrible; his, who, having performed an obfcure and painful part in this fhort drama, and having neglected to feek that kingdom promifed to the poor in fpirit, clofes his life and hopes together; or his, who, having had a confpicuous part affigned him here,

ſubmits, when the curtain drops, not merely to be nothing; but oh! how much worſe than nothing! Abſorbed in the illuſions and decorations of this ſhifting ſpectacle, or intoxicated with the plaudits of the ſpectators, the interminable ſcenes which lie beyond the grave, though, perhaps, not abſolutely diſbelieved, have been totally neglected to be taken into his brief reckoning.

Now, if pride were really a generous principle, if its tumour were indeed greatneſs, ſurely the ſoul which entertains it would exert its energies on a grander ſcale! If ambition were indeed a noble ſentiment, would it not be pointed to the nobleſt objects; would it not be directed to the ſublimeſt end? Would not the mind which is filled with it, achieve a loftier flight? Would it ſtoop to be cooped up within the ſcanty precincts of a periſhing world? True ambition would raiſe its votary above the petty projects which every accident may overturn, and every breath deſtroy; which a few months *may*, and a few years *muſt*, termi-

terminate. It would ſet him upon reflecting, that all the elevation of intellect, all the depth of erudition, all the ſuperiority of rank, all the diſtinction of riches, is only held by the attenuated thread that attaches him to this world — a world which is itſelf "hung upon nothing." True ambition would inſtruct him, that he is not really great who is not great for eternity — that to know the height and depth, the length and breadth, of the knowledge of God, and of his eternal love in Chriſt Jeſus, is the conſummation of all knowledge, the top of all greatneſs, the ſubſtance of all riches, the ſum of all wiſdom; that the only object ſufficiently capacious to ſatisfy the graſping deſires, to fill the hungering ſoul of man, is that immortality which is brought to light by the Goſpel; that ſtate which has God for its portion, and eternity for its duration, is alone commenſurate to the grandeur of a ſoul redeemed by the blood of Chriſt. This holy ambition would ſhew him, that there is a littleneſs in whatever has boun-

boundaries — a penury in every thing of which we can count the value — an infignificance in all, of which we perceive the end.

Let it, then, ever be confidered as a destitution of true greatnefs, practically to blot out eternity from its plan. As a confequence, let that be truly defignated "the wifdom from above," which makes eternity the grand feature in the afpect of our exiftence. And this ambition, be it remembered, is the exclufive property of the humble Chriftian. *His* defires are illimitable — *he* difdains the fcanty bounds of time — *he* leaps the narrow confines of fpace. He it is who monopolizes ambition. *His* aims foar a bolder flight — *his* afpirations are fuftained on a ftronger pinion — *his* views extend to an immeafurable diftance — *his* hopes reft in an interminable duration.

Yet if his felicity does not, like that of fecular ambition, depend on popular breath, ftill it fubfifts on dependence. It fubfifts upon

upon a truſt which never diſappoints — upon a mercy which is never exhauſted — upon a promiſe which never deceives — upon the ſtrength of an arm which "ſcattereth the proud in the imagination of their hearts"— on a benignity which "exalteth the meek and humble"— on a liberality, which, in oppoſition to worldly generoſity, "fills the hungry alone with good things," and which, contrary to human vanity, ſends only "the rich empty away."

Humility is an attribute of ſuch antipathy to the original conſtitution of our nature, that no principle can poſſibly produce it in its full extent, and bring it to its complete maturity, but that of the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. No ſpirit ſhort of this can enable us to ſubmit our underſtanding, to ſubdue our will, to reſign our independence, to renounce ourſelves.

This principle not only teaches us to bow to the authority and yield to the providence of God, but inculcates the ſtill harder leſſon of ſubmitting to be ſaved in the only way

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He has appointed — a way which lays pride in the duſt. If even, in the true ſervants of God, this ſubmiſſion is ſometimes interrupted — if we too naturally recede from it — if we too reluctantly return to it, it is ſtill owing to the remains of pride, the maſter-ſin; a ſin too ſlowly diſcarded even from the renewed nature. This impartial conqueſt of the ſtubborn will, this imperfect reſignation, this impeded obedience, even in the real Chriſtian, is an abiding proof that we want farther humbling, a mortifying evidence, that our hearts are not yet completely brought under the dominion of our principles.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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